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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Native Education: Whose Vision, Whose Reality

by ©

Cora Weber Pillwax

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF Masters of Education

IN

International/Intercultural Education

Department of Educational Foundations

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Fall, 1992

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Joyce Edwards
Dr. J. Edwards

Date June 5, 1992

Dedication

For our Children

ABSTRACT

There is no better way to understand the experience of native education than to be a native person living its meaning. Native education then means what I live, and there are endless descriptions from native people to make this clear.

When native education however becomes a term restricted to a subheading under general Education, it acquires a definition of special practises whose interest is the socialization of native people into a non-native society. Native education then carries an underlying sense to non-native people that it reflects an attitude of compassion and acceptance of another culture. Of course, they define the special forms of methodology and curriculum which is to constitute this sensitive learning process called native education. When it doesn't result in properly socialized, refined, and productive "citizens", then the failure is placed on the heads of the "unappreciative, uncomprehending, basically ignorant natives who are never satisfied with everything they are given at the cost of responsible tax-payers' dollars".

The view that I take is complicated, you might say, by the fact that I am a native person and also a "trained" educator. Native education to me is an undefined concept. We can centre our discussion around the distinctions which have been made beween "schooling" and "education", utilizing terms such as "instructing", "teaching", and "training". I would, then, have to say simply that what we experience before schooling and after schooling is what really constitutes native education. This type of discussion, however, conceals the signficant elements which need to be addressed as the heart of native education.

In the experiences of the school, the non-native teacher has one definition of "native education", the native teacher has another, the native student has a third, and the native parent a fourth. Complicate all of this by adding the views of the non-native politician, the native politician, the "unschooled" non-native, and the "unschooled" native (I am sure I have probably missed some category).

My conclusion is essentially that every individual who is somehow directly or indirectly connected to the situation of native children in school will hold a view and a definition of native education. Each one uses the term unhesitatingly as if it had a "shared meaning".

This conclusion leads me to suggest that the way out of this maze is to see education from the child's point of view. We must question what we are doing in schools by looking at this beautiful flower of ourselves and asking ourselves...

Whose reality is this?
Whose vision are we involved in?
Will his experiences here support him on his own journey?
Will I be a true teacher and guide him on the path which he has already begun?
Will I help him to remain connected with his ancestors and his grandchildren?
Will this experience be a part of his becoming?

These questions are the essence of my work here.

Acknowledgement

It is obvious to me that I could not express my thanks adequately too those who have given me the gift of love and so enabled me to live and learn.

Completing this work has brought me joy; the memories and experiences that marked my time of reflection and writing have brought me face to face once more with the reality that we do not live without love.

Therefore, my life is my thanks to those who have sustained me, and those who will continue to sustain me and each other.

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Prologue

Native education has been a trap for us, a camouflaged plastic jungle into which we have walked and from which we must now find our way.

There are ways to distinguish a plastic tree from a real tree. Defining the term "real" is not part of this paper. In our common shared experiences, (with the exception of a few special persons) we all learn how to distinguish a real object of the natural world within which we operate and a plastic representation of the natural object. A baby plays with plastic fruit and eats the real fruit; eventually he learns how they are related. So while I said there are ways to distinguish a plastic tree from a real tree I don't intend to explore or discuss those ways. I am going to rely on one simple unfailing piece of evidence. A plastic tree produces nothing; there is no fruit.

****

There is a young pine tree straight out from my kitchen window. I can sit at my table and look at it every day. By now it is laden with a lifetime of my experiences through the reflections I have sent through its branches. A friend told me one morning "Look at that tree - how it has changed in a short time. That is a medicine tree."

I know how that tree and I are related to each other and I know how that relationship came about. Now I ask; if that is a medicine tree to someone else, how did that pine tree evolve into a medicine tree? There was nothing in me to say that it wasn't, and I noticed that I noticed that. I had some idea of what my friend meant when he made that statement. I didn't agree with all of what he said, but "medicine tree" as a term to describe that tree I could agree with. My experience and knowledge of that tree did not prohibit the use of that description by someone else. I simply would not use that term myself upon consideration of my own response and relationship there.

Another friend coming in would comment "Its nice to see you left that pine tree standing." Another might say "You're so lucky to have that pine tree in your yard." Another might not even notice the tree at all.

****

I remember sometimes a story of a native medicine person living in the northern Alberta bush near the Territorial border. My niece was working at an oil lease site and was out walking one day. She followed a trail she had stumbled onto by accident and it led her to this little house surrounded by bush and trees. She stood in shock, not only at finding a house in this isolated area, but at the brightly colored ribbons, scarves and other such items tied to the branches of several of the trees. When the old man came out of the house and greeted her, she ran in terror. He had wanted to talk to her, to tell her something, but she would never go back.

A while ago, watching a TV documentary, I watched a medicine person in a Northern Russian state travel on foot to a healing spring. There he tied a ribbon on a bush near the spring. Brightly-colored ribbons danced from every bush around that spring. Hundreds of ribbons which had been tied there by hundreds of people over several generations. The ritual itself offers entry into the same world but to two different peoples on two different continents. Reality of that other world can be verified by the two people who have been there and who in two different languages, describe the same world. Each one knows that the other knows.

So what does all this have to do with native education as a thesis topic? It places me in a context for you, the reader. You need to see me at my table in relationship with a pine tree which stands outside my window. I say you need to do this because I am going to share some of my thoughts and experiences in native education, and if I am willing to do that, then you must be willing to listen and hear more than my words. You must also not treat my words as if they are separate from my whole being or from your being if you read this. I am prepared to share a part of my being with you, and much of this process is painful to me. I ask you therefore to be prepared to make space for me beside you. If you do not do this, then you will not hear or understand any part of what I will say. When you and I conjoin as writer and reader, the domain which we create and in which we operate as a couple will either expand both of us as mind and consciousness, or it will negate both of us.

If, however, we do not connect in a meaningful relationship, or dialogue, there is a danger that you will misuse my words. The particular type of domain created by writer/reader union essentially places the writer in a position of freedom. The writer presents a gift (accepting responsibility for the words and ideas), but the reader cannot simply reject or accept the gift. By the nature of words and ideas, their power will lead to some response (change) on the part of the reader, whether the response is conscious or unconscious, admitted or denied. This concept of the power of words is integral to any discussion of dialogue, or , indeed, to any situation of dialogue.

Chapter 1

Introduction

If we as native peoples are to create life as our continuation, we cannot do it disconnected from the rest of the living world. A state of interconnectivity maintains and sustains the life of all its participants. However if we do not free ourselves from the present form of our interconnectedness with the flow of life outside of ourselves, we will die. We cannot live in a state of disconnection; we cannot sustain life in an environment of camouflage and plastic.

The "flow of life" is our environment, and includes other cultures, individuals, and all other living things. That we have not internalized disconnection as a value is not difficult to demonstrate when we review our social and political situation. However, that we have also not been able to break out of the social and personal limitations inscribed upon us demonstrates that we have learned and accepted for use, to a dangerous degree, the words and descriptions belonging to a foreign culture. We do not hold shared meanings with that culture or even with each other, however, for these descriptions. It is this factor which maintains us in an imbalance and disharmony within our environment.

In brief, we need our own words and our own descriptions, and we need to ensure that when communication occurs between two cultures, the words used encompass shared meanings. In the context of native education these words usually do not have shared meanings, and therein lies the difficulty of achieving dialogue and interconnection. For example, within the experience of native education, the term interconnectedness often gets interpreted as "anarchy" which is then perceived as evolving from the practice of "empowerment", "self-determination", "liberation", "dialogue", and, maybe even "native education" itself.

With this high degree of potential miscommunication between native and non-native societies, and the equally high degree of potential unwillingness for dialogue, native education as a practise holds very little promise to support the maintenance and continued growth of native societies.

Essentially, in any form communication, there is required a level of understanding or shared meanings (which is achievable) and a willingness (which is a personal choice on the part of each participant) to achieve an understanding. Both parties must be willing.

As human beings we operate within "a network of existence...(and as)...part of the environment in which we conserve identity and adaptation" (Varela and Maturana, 1987:234). Therefore, as native people "either we generate a linguistic domain (a social domain) through what we say and do, wherein our identity (as native) is conserved, or we disappear as such" (loc cit).[1] It is not possible that "others" or "other societies" will conserve our native identity - it is we ourselves who must do that. Therefore, how we choose to do that must be defined and described by ourselves. No one outside of our linguistic or social domain could possibly be expected to desire or work for our survival with as much fervor as we must hold ourselves.

When we describe and define our world, we shape our world. We cannot describe our world simply for the benefit of another society; we must describe our own world so that we can know our own world and thereby shape our own world. Varela and Maturana state "Language was never invented by anyone truly to take in an outside world. Therefore, it cannot be used as a tool to reveal that world. Rather, it is by languaging that the act of knowing, in the behavioral coordination which is language, brings forth a world"(1987:234). What we know we act, and what we act we know.

Knowing is an act. Through the process of our own experiences of human development within our own society, we know. It is not our minds or our consciousnesses "that know that we know". "We" know as total beings. Through languaging we develop mind and consciousness and these operate as selectors along the path of our own form of human and societal development. Or we might say, through languaging, we become who we are, but it is only in relationship with others who share the same language that mind and consciousness develop; wherein we become our Selves. This existence of Self is reached because through language and languaging we learn to know that we know. As separate from the simple fact that we know, being alive means we know, and being alive means we act.

Our knowing and our actions in response to environmental "triggers" have obviously kept us continuing on our path of "ontogenic structural drift"[2] or human evolutionary development. In other words, we have survived; hence, we know and we act. This is true for all living systems.

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[1] The original quotation in Varela and Maturana says "wherein our identity as scientist is conserved"; in all other respects the above quotation is verbatim.

[2] I use this term because my paraphrase cannot in any way begin to adequately reflect the power and richness put forth by these two writers in their development of this concept as an expression of respect and compassion for individual human integrity and dignity.

The awareness that we as humans "know that we know" developed through language and languaging. All living systems are "organized to generate internal regularities". The same is true for social coupling of humans through language "in the network of conversations which language generates". The closure of the network of conversation "constitutes the unity of a particular human society. This new dimension of operational coherence of our languaging together is what we experiences as consciousness and 'our' mind and self"(Varela and Maturana, 1987:232).

Thus "we" exist only through language and languaging.

"We" - or our consciousness of ourselves - come out of the maintenance of this operational coherence of languaging together. "We" therefore "operate as selectors of the path which our ontogenic structural drift follows"(op cit:234).

The whole strength of Varela and Maturana's The Tree of Knowledge is based on a system of coexistence for life if we want to remain in coexistence. This suggests an ethical base to the continuation of natural life on this planet. Ethical approaches, however, have not led us towards a resolution of cross-cultural conflicts. At any rate, Varela and Maturana have presented a description of life and natural systems which demonstrates that human survival is beyond ethics. Their work demonstrates the biological necessity of love for all natural systems, including our own.

We live in a state of coexistence or love. To live, to exist, or to be, means we know and we act as the same experience.

Perhaps then, knowledge would be the first step to eliminating conflict. We must, each one of us within our own respective societies, know that we may not know another's world but we cannot negate his existence by claiming that our world is one of certainty. We must take a broader perspective to a domain which allows coexistence, and both parties can "fit in the bringing forth of a common world" (Varela and Manturana, 1987: 246).

Much has been said by Western scientists in recent years which connects the latest development and findings in science to the ancient messages of the mystics in all societies, and essentially to what native people have said and lived traditionally. That one indication alone promises a hope for humanity. It will not be a hope for one undifferentiated mass, but for many interconnected whole societies. We must find new ways to "see" and "discourse", ways which are imbedded in respect and acceptance of difference (Urion, 1992).

Since it is obvious to me that native people desire the survival of their own societies, and of themselves as individual aboriginal persons (however they may be legally named), the defining and describing of native education as a concept and as a practise is of critical importance in the attainment of this objective.

In my contribution to the discussion of native education, I can only share my perspective based on my own experience and my own thinking. I have not taken the approach that this work is representative of one particular tradition of research or study. While an ethnographic process requiring me to maintain a participant observer status, or a more quantitative research technique could still be conducted in relation to any or many parts of my work, I was not comfortable with these approaches. The problems I have lived and observed within the framework of 'Native Education' cannot be considered in a part-to-whole process; we must begin from the whole and only then comes the possibility that we may see the parts.[3] Essentially, then, I set my own life up to scrutiny as one whole, and I share my reflections on that. I am not claiming objectivity.

The issue of ethics in research pertaining to human behavior (including education) cannot ever be set aside simply because a researcher judges himself to be an objective observer, or even a participant observer who has built in the balances to create an acceptable level of objectivity. There is no such thing as objectivity nor even an acceptable degree of objectivity as long as I am a human being and I see you as another human being. When you become a bug, and I remain a human, then I might begin to consider myself (with caution) as an objective observer.

Until this occasion arises then, when we relate as two individuals, especially from two different cultural groups, we are both observers of each other, and the degree of accuracy of my observations depends on the very same factors as does the degree of accuracy of your observations. Neither of us, however, can claim objectivity. We have no way of looking at ourselves from outside of our own individual and interactive experience. Describing this reality, Varela says:

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[3] I, as one of the 'native' people, have been studied under qualitative and quantitative research techniques. I have sat in university lecture halls and in small community halls and listened and lived with the results of some of this research. Sometimes I knew I was an object of study; most of the time I did not. None of this was of any consequence anyway until the day, which invariably came, when I could see how the research results were being interpreted and used by institutions and agencies to more efficiently 'civilize' us as a people. (I say institutions, with the meaning that institutions are composed of individuals; research is conducted by individuals, and interpreted and used by individuals. Institutions don't disrespect individuals; individuals do that.)

> ...when observing a frog, one may indeed ask, for instance, how its retinal receptors and neural networks "respond" to a shadow in the environment. Such a question makes sense from the observers point of view, because, as observer of the frog, one has independent access to the experiential item one calls "shadow," and one can, therefore, legitimately invest it with the capability of triggering a perceptual event in another experiential item that one calls "the frog's visual system." When observing oneself, however, one is no longer in that privileged position. What we ourselves perceive, whether we call it a frog, landscape, or mirror image of ourselves, is simply what *we* perceive: and since we have no way of looking at ourselves and our environment from outside our own experience, we have no possible independent access to whatever it might be that, by analogy to the frog, we would like to hold *operationally* responsible for our perceptions. Strictly speaking, we do not have access to our cognitive domain, for we cannot step outside it and see ourselves as a unit in an environment. Herein lies the essential asymmetry between the study of the frog's cognition and the study of our cognition (1979: 274).

Despite this type of convincing logic, native people are still very much perceived as objects of study and observation. Native Education itself tends to serve very often as an avenue for "legitimate" observation of native students under the guise of objective research. This is one factor which has led to a very strong native position that native education must rest totally in the hands of native parents and native communities with native administration and staff. This position guarantees some protection and defense against being objectified, but the process of achieving this goal is rarely implemented. The difficulties underlying this implementation are well-known to native educators and to most native political leaders. Nonetheless, most of these people will continue to say that "we'd rather make and live with our own mistakes."

A stance of isolation, while a seemingly logical strategy to avoid non-native interference, would be almost impossible to maintain because the base of native reality is that spirit of interconnectedness with all living things. A system of isolation is totally contradictory to the life-force of being human, except in the world of politics and words. Most of us as native people would not choose to pull ourselves apart from humanity as a part of the circle of life. Yet, the reality of our Euro-Canadian experience is that Canadian institutions do not reflect equality and respectful co-existence of societies. This is obvious when we consider that other cultural groups come to Canada and willingly submit themselves to a "pluralistic" society. In fact, they are labelled "visible minorities" and they must accept that special status as if it is a gift from a benevolent people. Since the reasons so many of these people come to Canada is a matter of physical survival, they are willing to subsume themselves into becoming "Canadian", until they form a sufficiently large enough population to build a nucleus of support for themselves as cultural group or society. Aboriginal people, by the very nature of being indigenous to this land, will probably never develop this feeling of thankfulness to Canada as if it were a place which granted them a new life and refuge from personal and cultural disintegration.

I need only to think of my own family, and the soil of this land breathes forth the richness of life that has sprung from the flesh, and bones, and blood of my ancestors. I didn't arrive here yesterday, or even a hundred years ago. I am the life and breath of this land, because my forefathers were given life here and gave life back. This land and I will breathe as one because my grandfather and my grandmother are regenerated in me, and will be so again in my children and their children. I can understand somewhat the tragedy that a traditional people will experience in being driven from their homeland. Though the spirits that infuse a new land may be kindly, they are not recognizable. Hence, they have no power to sustain life as the people know it. However, to us this is our homeland; we recognize the spirit that sustains us.

How does one then encompass these differing realities, and indeed different worlds, into a positive discussion of Native Education? While isolationism may seem highly objectionable as a solution to cultural incompatibility, the alternative seems to be increasing violence and confrontations. Is it possible to approach the experience of Native Education with a framework which describes a knowledge about knowledge, and which encapsulates the growth of cultures within the development of human consciousness and self-identity through shared visions or shared meanings?

In the end, we must, of course, answer the fundamental question of who is being served by Native Education, and also, who holds responsibility for its effects.

Responses to these questions cannot be perceived as being valid only from native people or only from non-native people. Because both societies are involved in the activities ascribed to Native Education, individuals of both societies must have answered these questions prior to becoming involved in such a process. Unfortunately, we don't always know what we think until we have observed and analyzed carefully what we do.

This work is a sharing of my own observations and thoughts based on my experiences and studies. I can share what I know about myself and my cultural group simply because I am willing, and I am writing. Writing permits the gift-giving, without the expectation of an attendant receiving. Speaking does not contain the same freedom.

I send my deepest appreciation to all of the people who walk with me through these pages in the living, the writing, and the reading.

Chapter 2

Principles of Native Education

There are basic principles which have guided my life and the lives of my family group. These principles underlay the practices and traditions which we follow. In the past, my grandfathers and grandmothers expressed these principles through their lives in a different form than I do. However, because the essence or real meanings (in this paper, I call them "principles") are maintained through the generations, it is from these "principles" that I wish to begin. The form which the expression of principles takes may vary from one generation to another, and from one individual to another even within the same generation. Nonetheless, because we are given the principles of living in our childhood, we are able to recognize these no matter in what practices they come clothed.

I must state clearly that throughout the writing where I will speak of the "native child" and of "native people", I am expressing my perceptions, my thoughts, my own lessons which were given to me. I am not speaking categorically for all "native people". I am speaking as one native person expressing my own experiences as a member of a Cree and English speaking family group of northern Alberta. Because the family groups in northern Alberta at the present time find themselves living virtually "on each others doorsteps", and because I remember and was told of earlier days when the family groups visited each other during certain times of the year only, I find myself writing this chapter with strength and a confidence that what I am saying would be supported by other native peoples. Nonetheless I can only attempt to share in this chapter those reflections of my own experiences which I feel are relevant to a discussion of Native Education.

The basic principles I find pertinent to the whole discussion are as follows:

- A native child learns what he needs to learn when he needs to learn it.
- He is related to all other livings things on Earth
- His life is his own, but a state of inter-relatedness exists for him throughout and even after his life ends on earth. It is a state of being, where he is an individual, and simultaneously a part of a "living group", an organic whole.
- He is responsible for his own actions and the effect of his actions, whether negative or positive, visible or invisible, on other people, animals, and forces.
- He is responsible as a human being to protect the Earth, and to actively respect all animals and plants,

- He has his Being in a Living Spirit which is the Source of all Life for all livings things on earth. As such he is one with all of these things, and must be in union with the Source.

A native child must learn to know himself in his own cultural group before he can begin to know himself as part of another cultural group. Although this is true, it reflects only a part of a larger statement. There is an inherent weakness in this line of thinking which suggests a sequential learning. The native child does learn to know himself and to see himself as part of the larger whole of his own cultural group. But, this must be extended to include the fact that the native child also learns simultaneously to see himself as a part of all natural life on Earth. He learns these attitudes towards life by living them from birth. And in his learning, there is no end time wherein we can state that by the age of six years he has learned these things. The main point is that this child knows himself and knows also that he is part of the world.

No, it is not an intellectual lesson which is gained. It is a beginning of an on-going process of becoming a fully human Being. What then becomes disastrous for this developing child is that he must enter a foreign educational system. Here there is no such thing as a nurturing atmosphere for his creative becoming. There is not even, as some have said, a neutral atmosphere for his being. It is rather a space for his dying; a space and a time to which no native person, including myself, would ever object if one single element was present prior to the placement of that child in that situation. That single crucial element is *choice*. A child will recognize the smell of death, but even more quickly, he will sense the pending destruction of himself and perceive intuitively the greying of the light of his personal being. It is unlikely that anyone, including a child, would choose death except in very exceptional circumstances.

It perhaps seems harsh to describe a grade one classroom as a place of death. And it is perhaps more harsh to speak of that coercion of our children as brutal and criminal.

I am not saying that all Grade One classrooms are black and gloomy as we tend to "see" Death, and I certainly am not condemning grade one teachers as criminals. I am saying that when children at five years of age must be forced into changes of language and culture, that is brutality. When a child urinates at his own desk because of fear and a total inability to make sense of a particular world, a crime is being perpetuated. When a child sits at his desk and eats up his shirt cuffs, abuse of innocence is being conducted and hidden under legislation and policy. How easy it is to write these sentences in a way which excludes the existence of the perpetrator of criminal abuse in a Grade One classroom! Maybe because it is hard to admit that we are all guilty, not just the unfortunate teacher who happened to be present in the room. Admission or recognition of guilt does not prevent the suffering of even one child, nor does the writing nor the analysis of this situation. I am not optimistic that these incidents are not still happening. To the extent therefore, and in the manner, that we support, advocate, condone, or even actively participate in the present educational system and practise of schooling toward native children, to that extent we must accept the guilt of spiritual brutality.

A native child enters the world of his own people and begins what is to be hopefully a long journey of Becoming a Man or Woman. He gradually begins to learn that his life is, firstly and foremost a state of Being. He learns that he is Spirit. He learns that the animals and the plants are part of his family on the earth and that they have spirits, too. He learns that possibilities of relationships exist between himself and other living things. He learns to feel the inter-relatedness and the connectedness amongst all living things. He learns his place in the world.

He learns the roles and relationships and responsibilities of each one of the people in his "group" both to each other and to himself. He simultaneously learns his roles and responsibilities and relationships to each one of these same people. His world is dynamic, creative, ever-changing. How does all this learning place? He learns firstly through a form of communication which does not rely on words. His learning for this life begins in the womb. It was nurtured by his mother, and her supporters, through her. He came into the world and began a new phase of learning. His learning proceeded from a familial and group atmosphere of living, caring, and respect for himself as individual.

The one fact which made his learning possible at seemingly such an early age was that his mother and other members of his group were able to communicate these things to him. They had not given up nor lost their ability to be centered in themselves and yet be cognizant of the surrounding physical world and its realities. Because of this ability to be centered as conscious individuals his people were able to communicate all of the positive energy and love which the child needed in order to learn and grow.

Learning for the child was a gradual process where spiritual and emotional communion expanded to include physical contact, talking, and finally movements and speech of his own volition. His intellectual and physical understanding of the world expanded but not at the cost of his emotional or spiritual understanding. Each part of his learning enhanced or supported the other parts. He was in the process of actively becoming a whole human being.

To describe his visible world would be taking a risk of stereotyping, but, generally, to acquire these basic learnings, certain behaviors on the parts of the other members of his family group in relation to and of himself could be cited.

For example, most native children grow up with as much physical space as they need. This is contrary to what is often described, for example, as oppressive physical conditions wherein the native child has no bedroom of his own to call his private space. It may be true that each child does not have his own bedroom, but that is rarely a problem for the child. He has learned very early that he can and should make his own space. This space is by no means limited to the inside of the physical "home".[1] In fact, very rarely does this occur. This is because another point in this web of inter-related learning is that the child learned how to have communion with other living things and elements, and to draw energy from this communion. Therefore, logically, his private space may only be "private" in the sense that he is physically separated from other people. His "private space" would easily be a space in nature, surrounded by trees, plants, rocks, and probably near a strong elemental force like water. It is here that he has learned to sense a replenishing of his own spirit. That, after all, is one basis for a need of "private space".

In interactions with other people, he learns that he does not need to fear for invasions or aggressive actions in regards to his privacy or his own personal needs for space. This is addressed not only to his physical space, but, more importantly to his emotional or psychic space in interacting with other individuals. By learning to recognize another person's communication regarding private space, he learns to communicate his own needs in the accepted manner. He learns early, too, that these communications must be respected and adhered to, in order to maintain human relationships on a basis of respect and love. His needs for personal space, whatever form these may take, once communicated, are rarely violated unknowingly by another adult member of his group. As a child, he is learning that particular system of communication and that set of rules governing actions surrounding the human need for personal space. The whole set of learning which takes place results in a very complex in-depth understanding of self and others. He learns more than a mere recitation that each child has a right to his own bedroom. A statement like this, often made in a classroom or school setting with no accompanying set of values and experiences, will confuse a child and likely lead him to question his own learning because an adult has suggested an inherent value to the physical space in a physical building. The meaning of the world would begin to take on a very materialistic physical hue with no connection to Being.

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[1] There is no word for "home" in Cree which holds the same connotation that the English term contains.

We can use the Cree language to demonstrate that the basic principles and values are learned early. As soon as a child learns to understand and to speak, we can see that in words such as bread, there is a life attributed to this word and a relationship implied in the way this word is used within the language structure. Bread is described as animate. Bread has life and therefore there is a possibility of interacting or participating with it. It has a life and meaning of its own. It is imbued with its own power of giving life. A whole person then is capable of becoming a participant with bread and thereby the participating experience is a creative one. The word "bread" is always used in the language implying a relationship context. Material objects, too, which are made by native people are imbued with spiritual power and therefore have a living being or reality. The word for these objects and the way these words are used contain this element of "living being". There are relationships established between them and their makers, or users.

In the Cree language, all of life is expressed as relationships. If I am biologically studying "a nose", it is not possible to discuss "a nose" as separate from a body. There is no Cree for "a nose" which does not contain the reference to the body. It must be "his nose", "my nose", "our noses", "their noses". In the English language, we objectify everything which we study as if we play no part in the meaning which is derived thereof. To that extent, we also objectify ourselves, or we believe that we can objectify ourselves. We hold this attitude to life and it is demonstrated by the words we use. But, if we rely only on our words, then the meaning becomes synonymous with the word being used in English. We begin to believe that words are external to ourselves - that they somehow have meaning beyond the people who use them.

For people using the Cree language, on the other hand, the meaning is derived from a relational context of "myself" and the "object" of study. Here, meaning enters as a third element and is a creative result of the interaction between the individual and the object. This view of "participatory knowing"(Varela, 1979:xvi) is reflected in the native language itself. English reflects an attitude of observation towards life. An individual only observes life - life is outside the individual. The language itself does not in its own structure, reflect participation or interaction between person and "object". The English language can be used to describe a state of interaction, but, as such, it, within itself must be viewed as a tool which does not and cannot enhance life. Ever-changing, true, but always only observing and describing. Words in English are not used to create meaning, like a work of art and thereby taking on their own power, they are used to explain something "out there", separate from the speaker.

Becoming, is the key concept for human development. A child is constantly in a state of becoming; and his natural world around him is also in a state of becoming. He is participating with all living things as part of his energy for growth. And, he is living respectfully towards all other living things, learning that his life and the life of all living things are intertwined in direct creative relationships.

How basic principles for living are learned is specific to each cultural group. Through these each cultural group maintains its strength and its integrity. It is the life of its own children. The basic principles of life must have human expression, and these modes of expression are the culture of the group. If the modes of expression are lost, the child has no avenue by which to consciously learn the principles and to give them expression in his own life. He will however still hold these principles because they are the roots of his being in his unconscious. Nonetheless, in order to survive in the physical world with a sense of himself as a wholly human being, he must have the opportunity to learn the means of expressing his unconscious being. Try to imagine the child who knows his roots, has lived the basic principles in action for a part his life, and then suddenly, finds himself within a world where none of that creativity of meaning or interaction of life is present, or even suspected or alluded to, in any manner.

What is it then that holds a native child to his people, and to his own identity as a native person? It is a collective vision of the shape of the earth, a vision that the earth is shaped by the interrelationships of all mankind, a vision of which he is a part. And, within that larger vision, held collectively by a people, are visions particular to each individual. These particular visions are never in conflict, or contrary, to the collective vision. They are visions received by, held, or enacted upon by individuals on their separate journeys through this earthly existence. They are given to guide or assist one person or many towards fulfillment of themselves as Human Beings and thereby also, towards the fulfillment of mankind as a unified whole. We are not the Earth, and the Earth exists without our visions or efforts. But she is there to assist us in accomplishing that great task of our own unification. She and we are inexorably linked in our collective Lives. Her natural way of being is our own way of becoming whole.

When we begin to live under a collective vision, such as this, we find a freedom of our individual life which never gives rise to the superficial argument that the wishes of the one must give way to the wishes of the group. When we hold the collective vision, our individual visions and their enactment will never present a situation of conflict. In order to live our lives in a truly human fashion, we may seek, or be given without a search, a vision for guidance in how to meet the everyday demands in a manner consistent with our individual process of becoming. Visions take many forms, and can come to the individual in various ways. Some visions and their responsibilities and ensuing practices are directly handed down through family groupings. For example, the bear can become a being of great strength and power in the lives of one family group. The members observe ceremonies around the spirit of this animal, and they may never kill or eat the flesh of the bear. He is, in effect, one of the family. He can be called upon for assistance in time of need, and the family need never fear harm coming to themselves from any member of the bear family.

At times, an animal may come to a person who is seeking a guardian spirit. This animal becomes for that individual a protector and a guardian and a guide throughout life. The individual can, in certain states, become one with his animal guardian spirit and thus the strength and energy of this spirit becomes his. The individual treats this guardian with great respect because this is a spirit who helps him not only in the physical world, but, more importantly, through the spirit world. This is very significant because it is of the spirit world that this life and its expressions are images. We may not have or be granted sufficient power to perceive the spirit world but our guardian is there and of that world, and we can communicate with the spirits of that world.

During great moments of history, or through great persons throughout history, visions have assisted native people through turbulence and great suffering. There is no way of understanding the survival and the continuation of the native people as a people in the face of tremendous inhuman conditions of oppression without understanding the meaning of vision in their reality.

A vision is a glimpse into the real world. We are here to enact that vision. A native child grows up hearing and seeing persons whose lives, however simple or complex, are guided solely by a vision. He learns to recognize the basis for a genuine passion and purpose in life. He realizes early that there are differences between a passion based on a vision held within a person and a passion based on personal weakness and inability to deal with the external conditions of a person's reality. At the same time, he learns that it is not his place to pass judgment in either situation. He has learned, too, that life has a way of maintaining balance within itself and therefore, within the life of each individual. It is not necessary, nor appropriate or acceptable, to "interfere" in another person's way of expressing his life.

There are many references in written forms to the ways through which native youth and adults will seek a vision. Almost all of them follow a practise of isolation or maintenance of seclusion for a certain number of days while fasting - without food or water. This isolation and fasting is carried out in a state of prayer and meditation, an internal waiting for a dream or vision of one's helper or guardian spirit. The seeker may be in communication with spirits of the ancestors or of certain animals, or other beings of the Spirit World. What is revealed to him becomes his personal guide for his life. He may be given directions for making up a "medicine pouch", or bundle for himself, for a song, or some form of enactment for his people. The basic purpose, in whatever form it takes, is to receive guidance and direction for the life of the individual and that usually places him in a state of balance with the rest of his group. This guidance and direction comes from the spirit world and is used in the physical world. Both worlds are real and necessary to the life of the native person. One does not exist without the other and the individual must learn to move within the physical world while maintaining the connection with the spiritual world, the "vision" world.

Besides observing each individual life around him, the native child will probably have an occasion to observe, or at least hear about, certain individuals who are given, or who develop in themselves to a high degree, an ability to communicate with and to assist others to form connections with the spirit world. This ability is usually used for the betterment of the individual and the people. These persons are called upon for physical, psychological, and spiritual healing. They provide this healing, not through their own knowledge and power directly but by utilizing and translating the powers and directions from the spirits for the benefit of others. The practice of the "shaking tent" is an example of such an individual forming a communication link between this physical world and the spirit world. The healer will relate to the querent the response and guidance that he received. At times, what he receives is given for the people as a group. In this manner, the people may also see this individual as a very significant leader. He translates the future for the people as a group and provides the necessary visionary aspect of leadership for the people. Leadership entails the capacity for recognition and integration of all the necessary parts which form the intangible leadership body that guides the movements of the people. But without the visionary aspect of leadersh, a people cannot develop creatively as a whole; nor can the individual within the whole develop; nor can, for that matter, mankind in general develop as a totality.

So far, I have attempted to describe very generally the broad underlying concept of "vision" for native people. I also briefly explained how the principles of the world-view are based on a planetary vision wherein every living thing is inter-connected. Then, I focused, in several instances, on how a particular native cultural group expresses these principles in their everyday life and how the individual, child or adult, lives in a context of these principles and this collective vision.

In the following chapter, I will expand on these principles. The particulars of how and what a native child may learn are based on my own experiences. It would be an extraordinary experience of creating meaning if you and I could sit together over this sharing. Native education could become more than a concept. Nevertheless, this communication can serve as a partial bridging between us by providing an accurate glimpse into the "native" part of this term, native education.

Chapter 3

Creating Meaning

Within me, stock-piled memories and accumulated knowledge are continuously changing colors and shifting about in the endless flow of personal understanding.

From this very human base, I will introduce you to some of the people who helped me to become who I am. It was through my relationships with these people that my learning occurred. These were all my teachers.

Not one of these significant people ever told me how to teach, how to be myself, or how to achieve "enlightenment". They simply assigned me duties as a child, advised me as a youth, and worked with me as an adult. Thro ugh the sharing of their own lives, they showed me how to live and how not to live. Some lives were a source of joy to share; others were a source of incredible suffering. All were a part of my Becoming.

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My mother sent me out on hot summer days to weed the garden. The sky would be so blue that, when I lay on my back between the rows of carrots and looked up, it rippled because there never is just one shade of blue up there. On those occasions, I would watch the ripples and waves of blue - how do you watch colors ripple? - and I would simultaneously see the waves moving from the earth up into the sky. The smell of carrot tops and dirt would ground me, and lady bugs and other beings in the garden would eventually draw my eye back to the earth. Nothing ever stood still. There was no such thing as *stasis*. Always, though, I'd have to get back at those carrots, picking weeds and thinning. The perspiration would start to build all over my body, and my knees and back would start to object. But the difficult part was the routineness, it simply became boring and I became tired. I never cried or fussed at having to do this job because I knew it had to be done and there was no way of getting out of it. Everyone had a job to do. This one was mine. One day I consciously pushed myself along those rows without my "rest stops". I told myself to "keep going" and I didn't let the tiredness, internal objections, boredom, or the sky stop me. I pushed myself beyond myself. Everything stopped inside of me and I was only aware of the carrots and my own movements. However, I was also aware that something had happened inside of me - there was a stillness in the face of what had always been unpleasant to me. I felt a somewhat trembling elation when I was finished. I was afraid to lose that peaceful stillness; I wanted to stay in it. Many years later, I recognized and put words to my mother's gift.

My father left for the trapline - I watched him go - the horses pulling a canvas-covered caboose with the stove pipe sticking out the top. Everything was snowing that day, and I watched him disappear and become part of all that greyness. I was glad when my mother lit the lamp that late afternoon.

Aloneness was a feeling of grey to me then, but I watched my parents live it as an acceptable and good part of life. There was no fear in going out alone or in being left alone. I learned that the snow and the night have their own warmth and provide their own form of companionship.

My dad was to come home from the trapline that day. We waited and it got dark. My mother was frying rabbits. I was reading Fairy Tales of the Far North, and I can't see what my brothers and sister were doing. The light was yellow and permeated the room. My father came in, pounding snow off at the door. The food tasted so good that night, and the smell of weasels and squirrels thawing by the stove filled me with a quiet security of knowing everything was as it should be.

They took us on a wagon with the cow tied behind and we set out on a wagon road through the bush. For the child that I was, everything was love, balance - as it should be. I don't recall having a thought or being aware of any feeling, but I still see the things that I saw during particular moments or seconds of that trip. Playing in the grass, stopping to watch my sister stuffing grass at the horse's mouth. I see myself watching - stopping my own play to watch the horse suddenly rear up and strike down with her front hooves - inches from my sister's body. It never occurred to me till this writing to wonder why I stopped playing to watch this episode seconds before it happened! I see my father coming into camp later, and I smell the frying partridge that my mother cooked for our supper. I recall my father telling about the partridges, wood ducks and spruce hens that evening as we ate. Everything lived as a flow.

I was teaching Cree children in a school in an isolated community. I had been using a Social Studies unit prepared especially for "Indian" students. "Relevancy" was the key then. We were talking about Indians. This slim willow of a girl, beautiful as spring along the creek, sparkled to the back of the classroom saying "I know what Indians are - I'll show you". She brought me a book with the page opened to a picture of Indians dressed in beads, feathers, and leathers with tomahawks ready. For seconds, I felt stunned, frightened, elated.

The only thing that made me laugh out loud were all those sunlit faces looking up at me expectant and endless in their beauty and giving. I remember filing my emotions away for future reference and thought. I looked at them all and I knew I had to go on with what I had started. I felt a resentment beginning to grow deep inside of me at finding myself in this position. I recall the heavy sense of humility and compassion as I tried to draw them all inside of me. I opened my arms and put all of us into the whole and I said "We - we are the Indians". It was only after that afternoon was done, that I dared to look inside of myself and think over again the things that had been said and the feelings that these children had shared. It is still an experience that I pull out of my being when I need to be reminded that beneath the pain of labeling and separation, there was and always is a time when we are all one people. "Indians" are fiction and dream-objects then.

These same children opened up my own understanding and showed me where the basal readers I used as a child were the means of twisting my sense of beauty and homelife. Orderliness, security, and familial love were presented in one form. The books and the adults in my 6-year old school-life implied to me that I and my family were "lacking". We had nothing to parallel this form of existence, and no adult to accept our expressions and forms of life as equally valid and useful as a base for thought and development and learning. We were taught in other words to think only in the white context, in the white word. The gift that I was given in working with these children - who were as I had been - was to be placed in a position to receive a very significant redirection. I was old enough to have analyzed "cultural differences", and to have realized that I and my world were beautiful and valid. With this incident, I realized how and why I had consciously or unconsciously been taught to "accept" that my reality had no logical place in the world as it is. In simple terms, the "schooling" experience had led me to the conclusion that my Indian reality had to be separated from the white man's reality. This of course was never a conscious thought until I had the opportunity to listen to these young children.

I had to wait 20 years to grow up, get "educated", and then come back into the community before I could see myself in those children. They gave me my first lesson on the basis of classroom teaching.

My mother would be sitting at the sewing machine sewing hems on large squares of white flannelette when we came home from school. My heart would jump when I saw those piles of white flannel. They always meant another baby was coming and that was exciting, joyful news to share with everyone. In some ways, I even became someone special at school just by telling my friends that news.

Many evenings, my father would sit with us and tell us stories of the Russian Revolution, the French revolution, the revolutions in China. He would talk about socialism, communism, and capitalism. And he made it real by naming people who left these countries and came to Canada. We learned about the Depression and why and how it happened, how the poor people lived in the USA, how the Worker's Labour Unions started and how the government worked. He also told us about coming to Canada, learning to trap and survive with the animals and the environment. He made everything alive and exciting. There were no limits to the mind and to human potential of dreaming and fulfilling dreams in the face of tremendous and terrible opposing forces. He was the living proof of the strength and determination of our ancestors. We knew our heritage from him.

Our mother would tell us stories of how spirits were a necessary and normal part of everyday living. The forces of the unseen were in evidence all around and in us. We heard about the medicine and powers of our ancestors on her side, and we learned to listen to our own spirits, to commune with the natural world, and to respect all living things as meaningful parts of the whole of existence. We learned to pray in Cree because she couldn't pray in English and I learned early from that that prayer, in fact, doesn't need words. I learned the power of my own inner being, and experienced it as the necessary part of this reality I would come to know as me. She gave us the traditional native keys to order our lives.

I travelled over a winter road to see my grandmother. Winter roads meant a slow trip - therefore seemingly long - branches and snow brushing the truck mirrors, sharp turns and many rises and dips in the landscape and road itself.

It is not usually experienced as a leisurely drive, but it is almost always a beautiful, scenic and peaceful one. There is always the strong sense of having entered a different world...left "everything" behind to enter into a different world. This sense was intensified when we entered the little house where my grandmother stayed. She was 112 years old (approximately) and was being "kept" by her sons-in-law/daughters-in-law. Her physical space was on one of the beds in the second room of the house.

Upon entering the house, I had consciously stopped any internal action when faced with such poverty. Now when I saw the old lady, she dominated everything in me. I saw myself walking over to the bed (after she was told who I was) and putting my arms around her. She clasped me close in her arms, and we held on to each other. The feelings in me were overwhelming and unidentifiable. I couldn't register an intelligent thought. I felt like I'd come to a resting place and was collapsing even though I hadn't known I was looking or even that I was tired. I had trouble breathing because I couldn't take in her feelings and handle mine at the same time. The tears ran down her face and I ached inside and tried to stop mine. She talked to me in Cree - I talked to her in English with an interpreter. When I left, she told me not to give up, not to quit working for our people - that I was needed, that we couldn't quit. On the road, I cried and filed away the storm of emotions I couldn't think about just then. The power of that experience carried me through some of my most difficult times.

We would visit my grandfather and his family in their huge tipi every summer. They would walk from their community into ours and camp at the north end of the lake. They would be on their way to Lac Ste. Anne. My mother and several of us children would walk down to visit them. We would listen to all the news of the family and relatives from their home community and Mother would share her news with them. We would eat bannock, drymeat, pemmican or smoked fish and drink tea, and then listen to stories and teachings from their lives and memories. My grandfather towered over everyone commanding laughter or seriousness as he saw fit. His wife, a tiny fragile-looking bird, would laugh softly in the background. If she was addressed by her husband, her voice would merge with the thin haze and bluish smoke from the fire. I would be totally absorbed into the whole setting; the strength and certainty within the people there was as powerful as that of the tipi's circle, the open fire, and the ordered simplicity of their physical possessions. I couldn't take it all in so I simply became part of it, feeling as if I'd always been there anyway.

One or two days later, they would all come to our place. My mother would have fried up young chickens that we raised ourselves. Potatoes and gravy, garden vegetables and home canned berries, jams, pickles, and homemade bread would cover the table as an offering to these relatives who seldom came to visit.

My father and grandfather would talk and laugh all through dinner. My father didn't know Cree and my grandfather didn't know English but we all understood and were part of the flow, the joy, and the communion during these events. Of course, we children were on our best behavior. This was a formal event where the respect due to traditional native grandparents was expected and demonstrated.

Many, many years later I visited my grandfather in his house. He had been relocated and it was not a grand tipi anymore. At least not on the outside. It was a tiny shack, with not enough nails, and cracks to the outside. One window by the table let in the gray light. It was darkness inside but the dancing reflections of the heater's fire focused my attention in the room's centre. The old couple sat in the room as if they were sitting in a tipi. My grandmother sat in front of the fire with her legs folded under her. My grandfather reclined on his bedding on the floor in one corner. The room was a tipi - except it was a rectangle, and not a circle. The old man had been eating, also sitting on the floor. A table and two chairs beside the window broke the harmony, but could be ignored. What was harder to ignore were the two people sitting at the table. It struck me that they did not enter the circle of the tipi and its fire - at least not while I was there. In fact, there was a sense that they did not have a place in that circle. Except for a sign of greeting, when I first entered, they never participated in the visit. I went away in awe of these two old people who still laughed and filled their space with love, and reached out to include me.

I visited my uncle and his wife one January afternoon. The lights were already on, and the warmth of yellow light and orange heat from the wood stove warmed me as I stepped through the door, chilled and feeling like the "lone traveler" that I was. I had a long winter road in front of me before I reached home and hot tea would be welcome. I made tea while they sat and talked with each other and me. I sat down to my aunt's left on the sofa, with my uncle sitting to my left on a second sofa. My aunt was knitting; my uncle was telling stories. I thought I could feel myself relaxing when I realized it was more than that. I was relieved that I wasn't talking when this wave of heat and energy started to go through me. It was an almost hot glow that I could feel coming from these two people and it penetrated into my body while I sat there being swept into a state of "being loved". I checked their faces to see if they were aware of what was happening and they didn't seem to have noticed anything. In my thoughts, I wondered later if I had simply been caught in the line-of-fire of their love for each other, but I had definitely been a part of that whole ball of fire that they created, exuded, or whatever was done, seemingly unknowingly by their beings.

It was already hot one summer morning when this young woman came to our house asking for help. She was drunk and her lips seemed frozen and hung on to her words, letting them fall haphazardly. Because we couldn't totally understand her except to know that she had been beaten up and was afraid for herself and the lives of her two children, we followed her across the road to the town site. We passed two empty houses, and went into the third house. I felt everything in me stop. I looked and registered a picture of emptiness. The cupboard doors were all open and, for once in my life, I was looking at a situation where there was nothing hidden. Where I might have seen the insides of something with a torn surface, here I was looking at a ripped-open life with even the guts gone.

My mother went immediately into one bedroom with the woman. I still see myself looking at the empty cupboard shelves, the dirty chrome table with an opened milk can, and a salt shaker, I think, sitting there. Some beer bottles were scattered over the floor in one corner.

My mother brought me back by calling me into the bedroom. "Come and see this", she said and I knew it must be bad. I went in and I saw a pile of rags/clothes in one corner, and a crib. A baby, about a month old, lay there. Its eyes were shut and sticky. Dried blood surrounded its nostrils and mouth. The flies were buzzing around its face. There were small movements, but no sounds from the wrapped baby. I remember looking at my mother, then at the little girl, about 3-4 years old who had hung around the edges of all this dust and stickiness. Watching, giving nothing.

I could feel myself choking - pain and anger screamed inside to explode. I wanted to smash that woman - I said, "What the hell are you doing - you don't deserve these kids", and I hated myself because I hated her. I sensed my mother's uncertainty about what I was going to do so I calmed down and told her we would take them to where she wanted to go but we would go the health nurse first and have the baby checked. I insisted, once there, that the nurse drive to our one community mobile telephone to call the social worker to come out from town to check the situation. I stood outside the phone booth and listened to the conversation from our end. The social worker's husband answered the call. He said he wouldn't let his wife drive out there on a week-end, implying it wasn't safe. He also said she was busy in the garden and he wouldn't call her. The nurse insisted on someone coming out from Social Services and also told him that if that was his feeling then perhaps his wife should take a different job. I wanted to be angry at the nurse because after all she represented the "white system" too, but after hearing her I had to let go of that anger towards her. We all went home and waited all day for a second social worker, a man who planned to spend the weekend at his summer cottage by our lake. He finally came to see me in the late evening, after he had seen the mother and the children at the grandmother's home at the North end of the community. I listened to him talk and felt the sickness deep inside . There was no way to respond to the way this man viewed the situation. It was simply a matter of a fish talking water to a bird talking air. He kept insisting "We're trying to fix their fins", and I was saying "But we don't live in water". I remember crying, but not enough because I didn't want to upset my mother and my own family. The ache has never really left me, but I grew to admit to myself that there are thousands of homes like that which I will never see.

Every evening for most of my young adult years, I went for a walk. Walks in the rain were often powerful experiences. One evening, I sat on a rock beside the lake while the rain slashed down, driven by a hard wind. The lake was in full force, too, throbbing and pounding the rocky shoreline. I stayed on the rock with all that water pouring over me, tears pouring down my face with no reason that I recall, a part of the water itself. Resistance from any part of me was gone. Every fibre of my clothing ran with the water, and my being melted away and pounded with the waves and wind. I don't recall thinking, but I was aware of being a part of that thunder and powerful motion.

Another evening, on that same rock, a rose petal drew silently into view, and I watched it. It began to glisten, and then deepened, pulling me into itself. It became everything around me, and I was aware only of its quiet magnetism and my own flowing into it. There is never time to these events, but when I was back in the sunlight, hearing the ripples of the lake, I looked at that rose; I picked it very carefully and I ate the petals.

I went hunting early one fall morning with my eight year old son. We needed meat and I had been hunting with other people who were experienced hunters. This morning I had gotten up with a seriousness inside of me. We drove to where we had been on several different occasions and where there were many deer tracks. I placed my son with his .22 magnum on a tree in the brush pile and told him to wait, and not shoot until the deer came to him. I went further down the field to another row of brush piles. I sat down on one of the fallen trees, and leaned back into a natural concealment of dead brush and limbs. I heard something coming from about 200 yards, and I listened to the soft occasional rustles and snaps of grass. She came into view, a doe with a yearling. I watched them move, eating slowly, down the clearing towards me. They were eating about 10 feet in front of me when I shot, and the doe fell. The yearling jumped and then stopped and looked at me. I saw my own shock reflected in the eyes of this beautiful quivering animal. Then he bounded away. I stood there shaking, feeling the tears. Then I remembered it was a gift, that I had an eight year old boy who was coming towards me. I couldn't cut the doe so I left for home to get my brother to come and help me.

Two cow moose on two different occasions presented themselves to me. I knew they were gifts, but I couldn't shoot. I'd feel badly later, and face depressing confusion. I had two dreams. The essence of each was:

a) I was ready to shoot at two deer in a low valley just below me. They turned into two Indian ladies, aunts of mine, wearing flowery printed dark dresses, stocking, socks and shoes, and sweater-line wraps. I woke up in shock;

b) I had shot a moose and was splitting it open when it turned into my brother. He was not dead or dying and the message was clear. "I am giving myself for you." Again I was shocked.

For a long time, I couldn't get a sense of certainty in my interpretation of these dreams. I kept thinking along the lines of the people who say, "Oh, those poor suffering animals," and thinking that maybe I wasn't supposed to be killing them. But the sense of certainty was not there to make me accept this reasoning as knowledge and understanding. One part of the dreams were certain - these were my relatives.

Years later, on another hunting trip, we came upon a cow moose and calf at a salt lick. My partner shot three times and the cow ran a few feet, and stopped. I remember my sequence of instantaneous thoughts. "Why is he missing?" "He is a very good hunter." "She's there for me!" When she stopped and turned around, I felt very clearly that she was looking right at me. I said aloud "What am I doing?" I remembered I had my own gun. I raised the rifle, I noted that I wasn't exactly sure where I was sighting, but the thought flashed "Just shoot anyway." So I did, and I watched in awe as she knelt to the ground. Like before, I started shaking and felt the tears. My partner looked at me with shock and a sense of wonder, then put his arms around me. In the days before this, I had been thinking again of my dreams about the deer and the moose, and considering acceptance that animals like these give themselves to us; they are gifts from the Creator and from themselves. So I had almost decided that I would accept the next gift. Now I had. There were several other indications that this interpretation of the dreams was the correct one, and that days events left me with a strong sense of humility and gratefulness to be part of the knowing family of the Creator. There was also a sense of wonder and amazement that at times things that sit before us in darkness will suddenly become illuminated. A moose became a living reflection of our mutual Creator, and accepted me as a living relative. In ways, it was frightening to live through. These realizations don't come as thoughts, in a sequence which gives time to internalize and accept. We simply accept them because they happen and they are real. Trying to explain or talk about them is a totally different experience.

One winter, I was on the trapline with my brother. We were traveling by ski-doo from one cabin to another, and checking the sets along the way. It was a clear, hard, cold day - a day when things crack and sound carries. We stopped the ski-doo on the trail, and he tramped off into the deep snow to check a set back in the woods somewhere off the trail. I sat on the ski-doo, taking in the stillness, the cold, and the beauty of this snow-covered wilderness. The tall spruce trees hung with snow and hoarfrost so everything glistened in the sun, while I sat in light shadow on the trail. Suddenly, I felt something watching me. I sat frozen, but nothing changed, so I turned my head slowly and looked around me into the bush at the side of the trail. I looked straight into the eyes of a cat! My heart jumped, and then I realized it was a lynx. I noticed that the lynx lay under that small spruce tree like a cat lays on an arm chair. His calm and watchful gaze didn't move from mine, and we looked at each other without moving. I could see he was not a wild animal. I was just starting to consider what that meant when I heard from a distance the sound of a second brother's ski-doo. A change instantly came over the lynx's eyes; it became a wild animal before it turned its head to look in the direction of the sound. I could sense the muscles tense but there was no visible movement other than the head turning, as the lynx's gaze swung back on me. At that moment, my brother stepped back onto the trail again, and I pointed at the lynx. I whispered to him that it hadn't moved and he said, "It's caught in a trap there". A part of me felt stupid, another part was busy filing away for future reference. My second brother now arriving on his ski-doo was the real trapper. This was a lynx, not a house cat.

Late one evening through a spring snowfall, shortly after my husband and I separated, my brother and I were driving two pick-up trucks over 150 miles of muddy road into a small northern community. I had been transferred and was moving into a different teaching position. The trucks were loaded down with all our belongings. One vehicle was not too reliable, and that made me nervous. My brother was 16 years old, relatively inexperienced at driving these types of roads. I was newly "independent" and had relied on my husband to drive in the past. Essentially, I felt very heavy responsibility for my two young children sleeping on the seat and on the floor of the truck, and my young brother in the truck behind me.

I remember following two vehicle tracks until the falling snow covered them up and then it felt like we were being swallowed up by something in the heavy darkness. I quit looking at the time, and quit watching the speedometer. My world got smaller and smaller until it was only us and the one or two feet in front of the truck's lights as we moved along. I stopped the panic in my mind by saying "One foot at a time" over and over again until gradually I accepted that these became one mile at a time, and I knew we'd get there.

We pulled into the yard of the little house, no electricity and no heat, in the early hours of the new day. There was not enough hope to even think of giving up. It was not hope or despair that carried us through that time. Looking back, I would say it was neutral will.

I remember my son lying in bed, sobbing, "I hate you - I hate you." He was missing his father. My heart was tearing, and the tears wouldn't stop. My head and throat had ached for hours. I felt the pain of this innocent four year old drawn into the despair I had helped to create. I didn't know what to say or do to comfort him. I just lay there and held him, screaming inside to God to help, to help him, to help me. He finally fell asleep. The next night the same thing started. I knew I'd never make it through such anguish, and suddenly I knew there was nothing I could ever do or say to him. There was no way to undo what had happened between myself and his father, and the personal guilt I knew would destroy me if I had to watch this continue in my children. I went down to the core of my being and gave up all else when I heard the words in my mind and said "I love you" every time he said "I hate you". This exchange happened only twice and he put his arms around me and went to sleep. He never went through that again, but I learned again the power of love.

Shortly after I discovered that basal readers were inappropriate teaching resources for my school children, I set up meetings in Edmonton with people who had the authority and had made the statements that they wanted "success" in school for native students. I was a young native teacher, and I had part of an answer. At least, the children would learn to speak and read English if I had support to implement my ideas. I remember what I wore that day, because it became a very important day in my life.

After the meeting started, I quickly became frustrated, and then angry. These people, all men, all dressed in suits, all sounding and saying the same things in different words - struck me as artificial, and as having already agreed upon a response. There was absolutely no doubt in my mind, and worse, no doubt in my spirit that I was sensing men who would never move, and never see. Their world was not to be disturbed, but worse yet, their thinking was not to be disturbed. I felt the condescension as they talked to me like an adult would talk to a child with a fantasy. I remember erupting finally and saying. "My father was right, I'm beginning to believe. He always said the only way people would ever be free to get ahead, to move, would be to find those people who held them down and take them out and shoot them."

I felt that statement sweep through the room, and I felt deep anger and a powerful force of animosity spring towards me. I remember a flash of fear because I wasn't sure why I was getting such a violent response. When one finally asked if I meant them, or if I was threatening them, or something like that, I remember feeling that it was important for me to say "no" so I stumbled some sort of negative out. The actual words I don't recall, because I was totally swept into trying to understand the intense negative and ominous response from the group.

I remember crying all the way down in the elevator and out to the car. That was my first meeting.

That week I went to three others - a meeting with the Chairman of the Board for that jurisdiction and a meeting with two people at the University - both persons referred to me by others as people who would "understand" and who would be responsive and helpful. The Chairman of the Board told me to keep doing what I was doing and there was really nothing he could do to help even if he thought such work would make a difference. The professor who had developed some 'native' curriculum himself laid out a very complicated process and told me to send him my work. He would judge its usefulness and relevancy. This frustrated me and I told him I couldn't see how he, a non-native, would be able to judge my stories since they were written by a native for native people. The second professor dug into all his deepest pools of dormant Christian compassion and listened carefully as I talked. Then he told me I was too young to do that work, and that I should go home, write stories for my own children, and 'practice' on them for a few years before I would know how and what to write.

So ended my first and probably most significant lesson in 'native education'. I went back to my community and continued as I had been doing - writing stories on chart paper with no time for polish and beauty and refined resources. Looking back, it was probably just as well that way. We had student-centred and student-designed reading resources developed on a daily basis and I've learned a lot about curriculum development since then!

My first teaching assignment was in a small town serving a farming area. One or two well-to-do farmers and many more struggling ones. There were only a few native students in the whole school which offered junior and senior high levels. When I finally had taken a reading on the lay-of-the-land, I wondered why there were so few - where were the others? Then I noticed the Opportunity Room had a class of mostly native students. That's when I started asking questions. I found out that the rest of the 'natives' went to the school in the town just down the highway. About the same time this observation was being made, I started visiting the Indians on the nearby reserve. I had really needed the contact with my own people but hadn't been aware of that until I made my first visits. The people were very poor; there's not much point in saying more. Stereotypical words flash in my mind - "abject poverty", " personal despair", "hopelessness", piles of garbage side by side with signs of government and religion. And in the midst of all that, a beautiful big Indian mother, enfolding al of us - her babies, her young people, her brothers, and me. They were fearful, but she brought me in. I remember hearing a story of those people. Somehow it was decided that everyone in that community needed a bath - so buses came in and hauled everyone to that little town down the highway and dropped them all off at the swimming pool to have a bath. How many perspectives does that story allow, I wonder?

One day my husband and I were asked to sit on a Head-Start Committee. It didn't take long to realize why I was there, but it also didn't take long to figure out that no one was really interested in what I had to say. I didn't go to too many meetings; I attended and helped with fund-raisers a few times. They needed the kids off the reserve to build up their head-count for grants and I used my committee membership years later in my resumés to white people in white systems. Head-Start programs for Indians was a very recognizable contribution in the eyes of the white system. I do believe the addition on my resumé helped me to look more professional, but I doubt very much whether any employer ever guessed what that experience had really taught me.

The Chairman of the Board wanted us to vacate the teacher residence in town because we didn't plant flowers and trim the lawn to standard. or so we were told. The Board didn't enforce it, but we were happy to move to an old-fashioned farmhouse and raise chickens. I don't think my brother-in-law getting drunk and relieving himself on the lawn at 2:30 in the morning helped either, but, you know how hard it can be to pick your family!

Actually, I had a wonderful first two years of teaching, with my first child, a champion girls volleyball team, square-dancing every week, and supervising school functions and dances regularly. I enjoyed all our times spent with the white farmers and the Indians, but there was never an occasion when the two came together. We rarely had social contact with the townspeople, including the teachers, except for one. Another first year junior high teacher was a lady in her late fifties. I visited her on their farm very often. I loved her and all that she was; it was like being apart from and yet loving something very beautiful that I couldn't quite understand. She taught me a great deal, I realized later, about the relationship between loving and teaching.

When I left that town, I thought I had been a good teacher. It was halfway through my third year in an isolated native community that I realized that if the young people had learned anything significant from me, it certainly wasn't academic. It would only have come from my love and concern for their well-being and development as young adults. I had probably been a good guide, counselor, advisor, coach, and friend. I had acquired good evaluation reports, at least as I recall, but much later I wondered how.

I kept on teaching, however.

I would go into a native community and make friends and be welcomed into the community. I would face tensions, animosity, and rudeness in the staffrooms of every school where there were more than two teachers. I would wonder why none of the other teachers would visit me or extend a friendly word. Then I would hear years later. Working on a staff of two, it took six months of tension and one long drive of enforced togetherness until my colleague informed me that he had been warned by other teachers in the jurisdiction that I'd have him lose his job. We became good friends and supportive colleagues after that trip.

One year, out of a staff of over 25 teachers, one elderly woman teacher became a friend. Many months into the relationship, she told me that her staff had been told not to associate with me. I had been teaching for four years. Eighteen years later, I was told by a first year native teacher that she as well as other staff had been told 'not to talk to' me! She told me this and she cried because she had resigned believing that no one in the system supported her in her work. She had not tried to talk to me because her supervisor had directed her otherwise. Things do not change quickly in the politics of education.

Chapter 4

Personal Understanding of Racism

While I had early childhood contact with racist comments and actions directed towards me or my people, I felt no response during my first years of immersion into the "white world".

It wasn't until I watched vulnerable native students at the mercy of non-native teachers that I remembered my own student days. I realized that I had to deal with the personal dilemma of where all of this placed me as a native adult and a native teacher.

Racism was still inconceivable and incomprehensible as anything 'real' to me. It simply didn't have any logic to it, but my observations and my own experiences were clearly demonstrating that racism was real, and I was seeing and feeling its effects every day that I spent teaching. I would watch children and young people 'steeling' themselves against their teachers. I would watch them at different times reflecting fear, anger, frustration, hopelessness, helplessness, awe, confusion, hatred and rage. Different students and different occasions but too many and too often. One thing that continued to amaze me was that most of the teachers involved in these situations did not seem to be seeing anything - they seemed to be only aware of themselves and their own emotions and thoughts. In their dealings with me, they kept a distance from me, almost never engaged in conversation of any sort, and if interaction became necessary, anger or conflict was a usual result. At staff meetings, where discussion might focus around specific students, classes, or parents, inevitably there would be a confrontation between myself and one of the other teachers.

In the beginning, I'd be polite and respectful and keep to the point, not pointing to faults or weaknesses of the person. I'd go home and cry for hours. I'd remember a child's face, and I'd cry in helpless anger, hating myself that I couldn't do anything to help, angry at 'them' for not listening, not caring. Then slowly I started to realize that this whole thing was serious business. It wasn't my personal "hang-up". Children were being destroyed; these people were real, their actions real, their feelings real, their negativity towards the students, the parents, me, were real. I got past the place of thinking I had to have an answer as to why they did these things. I understood only that it had to stop.

It all happened slowly and through terrible internal pain and anguish, but the inevitable day came when the other teacher would be the one who would break down and cry. These confrontations would sometimes occur at meetings, and of course more than once I was perceived and treated as the ugly black witch torturing the golden -haired princess in an almost literal sense.

It was a terrible period of learning for me.

Gradually, other staff became afraid to say anything openly when I was around. I had become the native 'advocate'.

I had learned how to argue and use the "white man's" logic. Essentially, I was learning how to think and act "white" - to be like them. This was the only way to superficially resolve conflict - using words the way they did. The personal suffering that I endured because I was cutting people down and breaking my own value system, I learned to face by resorting to anger. Anger allowed the words to come out and carried me through those years without personal internal annihilation. I didn't know how to use words and relate to people who weren't open to being "inter-connected" with me, or with us as native people. So I disconnected them from myself at one level, and the anger was the only thing that prevented me from disconnecting myself from them totally.

I was a dedicated and committed observer and student of the "white man's ways". At times, an individual would break out or step forward from the tightly cohesive white group, and would meet me face-to-face. These persons became my friends, often at the cost of their exclusion from their own group. Racism was an easy way to name the source of cohesion which held otherwise unlike personalities together in a force against "us", against "natives".

I have never accepted the role of counselor to those people who are willing to subvert their own being to "group response" to social issues. But, I thought then as I do now, these people need help. "Racism" is a word I used because I couldn't say with certainty what the force of the cohesion was, but racism's effects were real and obvious. Had I been a counselor with the responsibility of assisting teachers to maintain personal integrity, I would probably have searched for the source of cohesion under personal fear and lack of self-knowledge or self-identity. But the word "racism" placed that problem in their hands. The effects we would, and still do, deal with in our own ways.

Had I found unbearable the burden of personal suffering which came from the connectedness that I did maintain with these people, I would not have survived, either psychologically or physically. If I had disconnected myself, as they seemed able to do, the dissolution of my personal integrity would have destroyed me. Of course, I know it was not through my own powers that I was able to continue growing in this social environment; it was through and because of the powers that are provided to us as individual parts of our ancient collectivity.[1] I

Racism is a term which arose from the vocabulary of the people who suffer its effects. Obviously, it cannot be truly understood until and unless the racists themselves focus inward to bring forth the personal and psychological bases for their attitudes.

Racism then reflects a psychological or a mental illness in the person holding that attitude. We do not respond to the words or actions of a mentally unbalanced person in the same manner that we respond to "normal" individuals. Every cultural group has their own way of dealing with mental imbalance. It, therefore, becomes the task of the group which is being negatively affected by the racist to ensure that their people are protected from such negative effects. If the racist is not one of their own people, the group has no way of assisting the patient with his illness. Psychological and social imbalances within individuals of a cultural group must be addressed within the value and belief system of that particular group. It is not, therefore, the responsibility of the native people, for instance, to attempt to heal racism which exists among non-natives.

Racism as a disease cannot be addressed by the cultural group which is being discriminated against. It must be addressed by members of the cultural group which is susceptible to the germ. Techniques for early diagnosis and preventive strategies need to be developed along with programs for implementation if the affected cultural group is to survive and continue its evolutionary human social process.

This may sound as if I am ridiculing the mentally ill. While humor can be a sign of a highly developed person, I cannot claim to possess that type of humor. I feel quite safe to comment as I do because I am quite aware of the type and degree of ego-development which is encouraged amongst the members of the non-native Euro-Canadian society. This type of commentary will do very little to undermine or affect the human development of this particular cultural group. Its negligible effect of course is due to the insidious effects of the prevalent disease under discussion.

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[1] If none of this makes sense, I refer you to the Star Wars Trilogy as an excellent modern myth which demonstrates the development of the Self, definitely as a psychological process, in the face of tremendous life-threatening forces.

Chapter 5

Native Student Stories

I share the following descriptions of my memories of my schooling experiences along with some of my reflections on them. To those companions of mine who walked with me through those years, it was very good to look back and smile, and even to look back with tears. I thank you and I know your memories will probably give you different pictures of those times.

We grew up and we learned through all of it. A lof of the time, we didn't learn exactly what the teachers thought they were teaching us, but we learned tremendous lessons anyway.

My best friend was a very beautiful girl with the blackest sparkling eyes, smooth dark brown skin, and coal-black, long curly hair. She was not tall or skinny, or short and fat. She was also warm, funny, and popular. I admired her tremendously. She was very unlike me. One day when we were walking home from school, she said "When I grow up, I'm going to be a golden-haired princess." I was astounded and very impressed with her aspirations. The only very slight doubt I had about her achieving her goal, and this part impressed me the most, was how she would turn those beautiful black curls into gold. We were both very young; fairy tales were real, and Baby Sally in our readers always got more than she could ask for. Home had nothing to do with school and school was shaping the future. That's what we had been told and somehow I guess that's what we believed. If we went to school, then we could legitimately dream and anticipate that one day we would be part of a world like the one in the books.

I loved this girl for the confidence of her dreams. One day, my friend was called to the front of the classroom. Before I had time to figure out what was happening, I heard a terrible crack and I watched her head turn sideways, and the teacher's hand drop back down by her side, all in slow motion. I watched the marks well up on my friend's face as she bent forward, and I could feel my stomach wrench. How does a 10 year-old make sense of a moment like that?

The boys at schools used to play "north against south" at every recess and noon hour. They used long sticks sharpened and shaped into swords, or rocks, or, in later years, a football, soccer ball, or baseball. There were never any rules as I recall. Winning was based on brute strength and number. "North against South" meant Indians against Whites as I saw it. I wondered later how many years it took before the teacher figured this term was not geography, or if they cared what it meant. In my early school years, I don't think they knew or cared. The chant referred to the geographical distribution of races in the community. The "whites" lived along the south half of the lakes eastern shore, the Indians lived along the northern half. That chant of "North against South" was still being used when I was in Junior High, and we were being "encouraged" by teachers to choose sides for competition. By that time, however, the population distribution by race had changed somewhat by the influx of people, and, at one level everyone meant "north of the school" and "south of the school" when competing teams were being formed. Nonetheless, a cohesion based on race was a strong theme in some ways.

In my first two years of school, the smaller children were not allowed to play, and if we did, we did so at our own risk. Obviously, we didn't play. I remember when one boy, about grade 7 or 8 then, almost lost an eye to a sword thrust. I remember that we as "little kids" would walk some fence rails during recess on the north side of the school, and stay out of the way of the flying rocks of war. I don't recall seeing any little white kids or where they stayed

Younger students did the same work at school every day it seemed. There was a card with many little pictures on it. We had to find the words out of a box of cut-out words and put the word over the picture. We had a workbook for arithmetic, and all we did was count to 10, write the numbers and colour the pictures. In the afternoon, we'd go out when our turn finally came and "buy" groceries from the store which was run by the junior high students.

I remember the teacher would read a lot, sitting at his desk, while I sat at mine and watched him and the older students. It was all fascinating to me. School was a very strange and interesting place. Only the work was boring. This was my first opportunity for interaction with the "white world" and I spent a lot of time observing. I remember being placed in a double-desk with an older girl who couldn't read. She couldn't read, mostly because she couldn't speak any English. To me she was obviously a young lady, and it was not my place to be trying to teach her! So on these occasions we usually sat together and did nothing. Since it was class-time, we couldn't just talk. I thought it strange that the teacher would put me at 6 years old in this position. I think the girl thought the whole idea of school was funny, even ridiculous.

One day I recall my sister, one other boy, and I were the only students present. The teacher let us make wooden horses, using his set of power tools. That was a great day! Walking to school was always exciting too. We'd have icicle-eating contests, walk on frozen drifts that were higher than we were, stop and play in the ditches and the creek, watch the birds, and sometimes we'd see larger animals like foxes which would come on the trail.

The only thing I looked forward to doing when I got into the higher grades was the spelling bees. They looked like fun, and I was already a good speller, I thought. The only other good speller that I could see was a white girl in the upper grades. The second year of school, we had a teacher who brought her son with her to school. He was a bully, and terrorized us if we caught his attention. He used to call us "injuns" on the playground, and he would deliberately kick a soccer ball into our faces at every opportunity. I remember asking myself "why is he calling me an engine?" It seemed like an okay idea to be an engine, but strange! I knew engines; my father worked with them continuously. I remember it was years later when it hit me he was saying "injun". I'd never heard the term.

I admired that woman-teacher for her meticulous dress and appearance. She wore a dark lipstick, and I can still see the shape of her mouth. Her nails were always long and polished in the same colour. She smelled of perfume, though not of anything that I had ever smelled. I don't recall ever seeing her leave her desk, but I remember I did a lot of reading that year. I think discipline was a problem and that was the year I began to try to be as unobtrusive as possible. I found learning from books was opening my world, but I had to somehow avoid being noticed by the teacher and the other students. This was a habit I maintained throughout my student years at all levels. Being inconspicuous gave me time and space to learn on my own.

The next year we "got a mean teacher". A lot of our parents felt the school needed that. This teacher meant to teach us something, and that she did. She scared information into me. But she also taught me to recognize the many shapes that cruelty can take; especially cruelty to children. I say cruelty, but to her she had the best of intentions - she put her whole effort into training and teaching us. In her moments of frustration, she would call us "hooligans", and "savages". Individually, she had favorites. She would be encouraging, but strict, with children who were good students academically. With children who were average or below average academically, she was harsh and demanding using sarcasm and ridicule freely. She used the strap often, striking students on the lower neck and shoulders. There were "big boys" who didn't flinch, but there were many young children who lived in terror. All of the grade six class lined up one day to get the strap. We had all gotten the same wrong answers in arithmetic. No one would admit to copying. I didn't know and I don't think most of us knew how that happened. Anyway, we were all guilty of giving wrong answers and we were all getting strapped. The boy standing beside me was big. He wore a crew-cut open-necked sweat shirt and he had a large muscular neck and shoulders. The teacher came down behind us starting on the one end and striking each student on the right side of the neck and upper shoulder. I was watching the strap come down on the boy's bare white skin and when I saw the red welt jump up under the strap, I screamed. At that moment, of course, she was bringing the strap down on my neck. I must have scared her when I screamed because she hit me with her hand instead of the full strap. That was the only time I ever received a strapping.

The teacher was also constant in her comparisons between my older sister and myself. I was the "good" student, my sister wasn't. It was agonizing to be made a part of that situation, and to watch helplessly while people I loved were made to suffer this insane humiliation. My sister could practically run the household herself and helped to care for all of us. Obviously, she was not stupid. Being an older sister at home meant a lot of responsibility. An older sister was capable, responsible and much more knowledgeable than any younger sibling!

I remember my younger brother sitting pale in class every day, all day. For some reason, the teacher seemed to discipline him and ridicule him daily. He was so scared that he couldn't learn or do most of his work. I would watch him tremble at his desk when he knew she was coming in his direction. It was during this period of time that my brother became ill with tuberculosis. My mother blamed the teacher for his susceptibility to the disease. In my later adult years, I have agreed with her in my own mind.

I still see my brother sitting at his desk, full of fear; a sensitive, gentle boy who couldn't withstand the cruelty and psychological battering that "schooling" permitted, not only from students but from teachers as well. I was one of the good students, but the psychological battering did not exclude me. I felt as if I was part of her battering tool, and I learned to despise the high marks that I was continually pushed towards. High achievement for me meant that somebody else had to suffer. I would never work for the high marks; I did enough to pass each grade at the end of the year. My only defense I think at that time was my age; I was a child who had never known human cruelty and I had no way to think about it. I do remember, however, going through my mind, and making an important decision at 10 years of age. I was afraid to write the notes for my mother when she was angry and wanted to express her dissatisfaction with this particular teacher. My mother used forceful language in accusations of favoritism, bias, and racism. She didn't use subtlety, innuendo, or metaphor in the English language and, while I hesitated only briefly in my mind, I did write her notes for her exactly as she dictated.

That was a decision which reflected one of the first of many, many occasions when the values of my society had to be strong enough to overcome the training of the schooling system. Respect for my mother and trust in her wisdom and understanding was stronger than the ridicule and degradation towards the "unschooled" which permeates the whole educational system.

My mother always fought this inhuman system in the best and only way she knew, as did my father. But, in looking back, I realize that we were kept in isolation from any form of human rights and protection from abuse by those persons who were sent into our community by outside agencies. If we were to survive, we had to do so by our own wills and our own means. This was true, not only for education, but for any other part of our social reality as well.

This particular teacher had brought a new dimension into school. School became synonymous with control. The only part of a student's life which was not controlled by the teacher was the inner one. What I thought and felt was my own; deeply affected by the teacher, but my own, nevertheless.

When this teacher finally left, I had my first experience with the meaning of the written word. The new teacher had a routine during Language Arts class of having class discussions based on stories from the literature anthology. He would sit at the head of our row of desks and the six of us would look at our books while he asked questions. When we wouldn't or couldn't respond to the questions, he would finally give us the answers. He kept this up for months. Very gradually, I started to realize what he was doing. He was asking us to do character analysis, and analysis of other elements of short stories. Up to that point, I had never considered that a character in story was someone who could be discussed in a way which made him or her real. In other words, this meant that people in stories could be treated as human beings.

It was a tremendous form of empowerment to me. I loved reading, but this new realization suddenly made the world of literature possible as a part of my reality. Character development by written words could be understood as building real persons. Their lives could be used and discussed in ways which would help to make sense of my life or anyone else's life. This gave writing a meaning and purpose far beyond that of being a communication skill. The connection between the written word and the human experience was something similar to creating a vision. One became responsible for one's words. That was the first step for me in understanding what the elders or other native people meant when they attributed significance to "their words", and why there is often a serious concern with what an anthropologist, for example, will be doing with the words they collect.

Essentially, I realized that the Cree respect for the power of words and the recognition of personal responsibility for their use also applied to the use of English words.

This was probably the most significant learning during my junior high years. While I rarely did speak and contribute to the discussions and literary analyses, because I still felt it was foolish to think of a book-person as real, nonetheless, this whole process created an excitement for the written word. Writing unlocked a world inside of me. This same teacher taught and lived a respect for each of his students, and for our parents. This was also a new and beautiful lesson on human relationship. He did not have the cultural understanding of our people, but he did not need that in order to teach us and help us in our individual processes of becoming.

When I had to leave my home community and go away to high school, my experiences were similar to those described by educators who discuss the issue of native students leaving home and boarding out to complete schooling. I had the advantage of being older than most native students when they are forced to go "out" to school. I had been able to complete my Grade 10 year through correspondence lessons at home, with the help of the same teacher I'd had through junior high school. My parents had not wanted me to go out and I was happy to stay home for another year. I did not look forward to going away to school in town. But the inevitable day arrived and I left. The most difficult and immediate crisis was to undergo the excruciating personal pain of being wrenched away from my world of nature and family, and placed in an urban setting with white strangers. At school, I had to learn new subject content and figure out how to relate to impersonal and critical teachers. The rest of my being was struggling to deal with the paralyzing loneliness of the four white walls which now constituted my home and protection. The boarding home parents I had were very good and caring people, but they were strangers. They had no way of bridging the tremendous gap between my world and theirs. I don't think they ever knew what I went through; I never discussed my feelings with them or with anyone else, including my own parents and family. The times when I felt like giving up were very few and the reason was simple; I had no options. I couldn't stay home because there were too many children and I was old enough to be making my own way. I was no longer a child.

My father had said to me several years earlier that my options were to get married, be a waitress, or go on to school. Going to school was the only choice I could make. There was no one likely to marry and I knew I couldn't survive serving food to strangers. I was not a friendly, out-going, sociable personality, and I had already learned the limitations of that. With few exceptions, my experiences with staff and students during the high-school years were either neutral or negative. Most of the staff had little to say or do with me. Exam results determined my success or failure. I had little or nothing to contribute to the classes, and that's how I was comfortable. Only one teacher was very sarcastic with me, singling me out at the first class by suggesting that in their school my high marks from my home school might not look so great.

Some of the students used every opportunity to throw racist remarks my way. I avoided the bathrooms and the hallways as much as I could. Remarks from students tended to focus on sexual activity and promiscuity between "squaws" and "bucks". White people who associated with native people were "Indian lovers". "Squaw man" was used to address a student who dated a native girl. Every opportunity to degrade native people as "savages", "on welfare", "drunkards", and "easy" was taken within my presence. I never made any response since none of these were directly addressed to me. This was all new to me and I had not been prepared to deal with this form of ignorance.

I did categorize these remarks as coming from ignorant people and I avoided these people as much as possible. In fact, I avoided any form of social interaction with almost everyone. There was simply no need or purpose in such interaction. I saw myself as being there for one reason and that was to complete my high school courses. Maybe in that way, it was easier for me than it was for my younger brothers and sisters who came into that school later. I was the only native student in the high school when I started my program, and I was the first native student to leave my home community to go out to high school. In the years following, I was told by my brothers and sisters that they and their peers made their own social statements and responses to these examples of racism from the students. This action on their part often resulted in racism or bias from the staff. In my years, I didn't ask for help from the staff, nor did I receive any offers or expressions of concern for my personal well-being.

I didn't expect any of these expressions either, but I did appreciate the one or two comments of encouragement for good work from two of my teachers. Very definitely I had learned my lessons of individual responsibility very early in my life, and these carried me through not only high school but university as well. My father had always said "Everyone has their own job to do, and everyone takes themselves seriously. Nobody believes they are wrong. You have your own job to do. Let others do theirs".

When I was a student I did not question the methods that a teacher would choose to use in teaching. I did what I felt I had to do as a student - I learned. The two were not necessarily nor usually complementary. It wasn't until I returned after 10 years of teaching into a graduate program at the university that I experienced the learning that could take place in working with an experienced "academic guide". That was a totally different learning experience. Either these people were better "teachers" or I had learned more about how to interact within a different society. It was probably a bit of both. I know that I had already learned from my students that a good teacher is simultaneously a good student. Maybe these particular "academic guides" had learned that, too.

In the analysis of my own experiences as a native student, I attribute my academic accomplishments in a different society to several factors. One was the value I held of interconnectedness with all living things. This value did not permit me to fall into the trap of alienating myself from a society which seemingly had no place for me or my people. I found some opportunity to share this connectedness through a church group, but that in itself offered further significant insights into how wide the gap actually was between that cultural group and mine. Another factor was the degree of my connection with my own society and my family. Recognition and knowledge of myself as part of a particular cultural group gave me confidence and strength to believe in myself and in my people. There was nothing new or outside of my own cultural experiences which ever entered as something better or stronger that what I had been taught or given at home. Only the material world offered more efficiency and better things than we had at home, but these were not the "real" parts of life. These could be purchased.

A third factor was that I accepted the world of schooling as being part of a different society. It was not a reflection of us or of our society. On the other hand, it offered a way to acquire new knowledge and understanding, and a way to be self-supporting while maintaining my own individual and cultural identity. Essentially, schooling offered a means of economic self-sufficiency for me, but more importantly, it satisfied my need to know and understand the world beyond myself and my cultural group. I had to be willing to immerse myself into that culture in order to begin to understand it.

I think the most important factor was the confidence in myself, and the confidence in my own reality to be able to uphold me in facing the different elements which might come from entering a different society. My upbringing and my own reality had given me enough knowledge and understanding that new learning was not a source of fear or threat, but of new opportunity and expanded understanding. I had enough understanding of my own reality that I did not fear the consequential position of personal responsibility to understand and then to accept or reject new knowledge systems and new social structures as being beneficial or destructive to my own way of being or to the life of my own cultural group.

Perhaps the source of my strength lay with my own parents who were "unschooled" and lived their lives out of contact and therefore uncontaminated by the effects of the "schooled". Confidence for them, and as they taught me, did not lay within the structures of schooling. It lay within the being of a person, and was reflected in self-respect and respect for others. It lay within who you were and how you lived your life - not in what you did for a living, or how much money you made, and therefore, it certainly did not depend on what level of certification you attained in schooling, or to what social class you belonged or achieved.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that while I have not elaborated or focused to any degree on those elements which are promoted as parts of native education today, it is not because I feel such contents do not warrant considered discussion. It is simply because, in my experiences as a "native student", this approach to educating natives was not in evidence in any form. Native languages, for example, were rejected as useless; in fact, we were not allowed to speak in Cree. (Explanations for this rule varied.) History and social studies projected aboriginal peoples as "savages", "uncivilized", "dependent", and basically as a lower level of humanity. Educators treated us as if we were in school to learn a better and higher way of life.

Since I knew that this whole way of learning was a part of a different society, and based therefore on their own systems, it was not difficult for me to accept all this content and attitude as simply a reflection of a different society with a different point of view. With that perspective it was not possible that I would simply internalize a foreign set of values and thereby begin to feel "inferior". I learned about their systems and their values, but I did not internalize them. They remain parts of my knowledge base, and I used this knowledge to assist me in my interactions within that culture/society, and to further develop in mine. My own sense and strength of self remained within the framework and structures of my own society. In retrospect, perhaps the vulnerability of my youth was balanced against assimilation by the very nature of the society represented by the school. That society did not seem to have any capability of recognizing and accepting a different way of being human; hence, assimilation was impossible for me. Other and different societies of humans simply did not exist; students were all perceived automatically to be a part of the one society represented by the school. If a student's actions demonstrated values in conflict with the teachers, the problem was attributed to some form of inadequacy on the part of the student. Corrective measures, under the label of discipline, were applied. By the time I was out of the native "student" role, this approach had been replaced by a "compensatory" approach. This approach, while perceived by the school society to be promoting cross-cultural understanding, was still based on an inherent belief that "native student inadequacies needed compensation". Changing "inadequacy" to "disadvantaged" in later terminology did not change the underlying belief.

In fact, the source of the inadequacy lay, and continues to lay, with the wide-spread inability or reluctance of the schooling society to recognize and accept that, with mandatory school attendance, the world description of one society cannot take precedence over the world description of another society. In the instance of my particular schooling experience within the particular time period of our social history as native people in Northern Alberta, I was more insulated against the subtle, softer forms of institutional racism and that was a source of my own protection against personal disintegration as a native youth.

Chapter 6

A Literature Review of Native Education

In moving from an inventory of information based on personal experience to an inventory of available research studies on native education, there was some difficulty in deciding what native education materials should be considered in my review of existing literature. My decision was to select the Educational Research Information Centre (ERIC) database, and draw all items added since 1983 and indexed under the keywords Native and Canada, which produced 304 articles. In selecting this source, I made two assumptions:

1. that this information base would be the one most accessed by educators involved in native education today and
2. that this information base would reflect the most recent thought and developments in the field of native education.

This information base provided an excellent overview of the broad and varying perspective on native education as a concern amongst educators and the public in general.

In attempting to focus the issues around native education, I began my review of this information by categorizing the topics covered; this resulted in 24 categories. The topics ranged from teaching resource materials to native languages and evaluations, and the number of articles in each category ranged from 36 to 3. A 'general' category, of articles which did not fit elsewhere, included an additional 37 articles (See Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of these articles under each of the 24 headings). The following discussion describes the articles in each category in slightly more detail, and adds comments derived largely from my 24 years as a native educator.

Except for the 'general' category, the largest number of articles were subsumed under the category of Teaching Resource Materials (36). These resources included items such as curriculum guides, program packages, and directories. Seven of these were specific to language and tribal groups (Alberta, 1989; Pard, 1986; Guilty, 1986; Courtel and Amyot, 1985; Fraser, 1983(a) and 1983(b); Northwest Territories, 1981).

The post-secondary category contained twenty-eight articles which addressed some aspect(s) of post-secondary training for native people. These articles were predominantly descriptions of various colleges and university programs specifically designed for native students, or articles which expressed support for this approach in post-secondary training. There were nineteen articles in this particular sub-grouping, eleven of which related to teacher training. Student support systems received direct focus and discussion in three of the articles (Laing and Scarfe, 1986; Hurlburt, 1984; Moore-Eyeman, 1981), but the focus on special education programs implies a general agreement amongst colleges and universities that native post-secondary students need support if they are to be successful at these levels of training. The need for certain career specializations in work with native people was indicated in one article on law (Telid et al, 1988), two on social work (Smith and Pace, 1988; Smith and Pace, 1987), and two on school counseling (Mackenzie and Beaupre, 1986; Castleden, 1983). Adult education was addressed from outside the college/university perspective by five articles, one of which addressed funding specifically for Indian students (Marsh, 1984; Carney, 1982; McKenzie, 1982; Ontario Indian Education Council, 1981; Lidster, 1978).

The Government Reports/Documents category listed 23 items. Most of these documents were provincial in scope, with Alberta primarily represented (in 17 of the 23 articles). The reports presented the standards of native education services as being significantly below those acceptable for the rest of the province in all aspects. A review of Alberta curriculum resources which pertain to native people (Decore et al, 1982) demonstrated a high degree of inaccuracy of various types in these materials. Community or parental involvement was repeatedly cited or implied as a significant factor in the success of native education programs/projects (Alberta, 1984, 1985; Ingram and MacIntosh, 1983; Ross, 1981).

The danger of 'isolationism' on the part of native people was suggested in one of the reports as a possible result of increasing levels of native involvement in their own education (Alberta, 1984). I am pulling this point out because it indicated the shadow of a slightly different perspective on native education - different, that is, from those perspectives presented by most of the other articles. This point implies a recognition at some level that native people may after all respond to their educational experience from something within themselves, something other than reactivism, or the constant demand to "allow us meaningful participation". While the point itself carries a sense of a negative judgment, and the recognition is only slight, it hints that we may be more than objects of study, and that dialogue may someday be possible.

The Native Language category (18 articles) demonstrated much more accurately than other categories the broad range of issues inherent to this area of study, native language education. These include the need for native language instructors, bilingual factors, evaluation of programs and instruction, the need for resource and curriculum material, the relationship between culture and language, and finally even one article which discussed native language literacy and politics (Battiste, 1984). My own work with communities in the area of scripts (orthography) for the Cree language led me immediately into the struggles to standardize the language into one form of script. The politics of this discussion were obvious and threatened the development of any form of native language programming. Fortunately for me, I had available to me the wisdom of community elders who were the instructors and guides for the program. We simply avoided the whole discussion and each instructor taught the students the Cree syllabic format and the vocabulary which was used in the region of the home community. In this manner we had a well-supported program, which did not have to wait for the resolution of the political debate going on around it.

This debate about orthography did not stem from a traditional base of community knowledge and use of scripts, but from debates in the outside, basically foreign, contexts involving highly trained linguists and native language experts. What I experienced was that within the community, there is sound and compatible theory and praxis in native education. What was lacking was opportunity, and this means policy and financing, and certain types and levels of skills and understanding, to allow the richness of traditional knowledge and understanding to move from its background position in all aspects of native education today.

Native language education, by virtue of its specificity, probably holds more potential for development of research, study, and implementation of "new" methods than any other segment normally ascribed to "native education". This is so because it can easily be removed from "native education" and continue its development under the same processes followed by programs of other language groups. If native language educators separated themselves from the general category of native education, this might remove them from the inhibiting shroud of politics and social issues which continues to impede meaningful discussion and progress in native education. (Language programming does not proceed without a cultural context, and this seems to be an acceptable, albeit recent, view of language education in general.)

One final point needs to be made in relation to native language education. Its development is often impeded by a popular view that the strength and vitality of native languages is maintained at the cost of economic development and stabilization of native communities within a multicultural Canada. Non-native educators, and even some native educators who are working in native communities and who have acquired this misinformed view, can and do carry the message to parents that native culture and languages in the school will rob the child of opportunities for success. Success in this case means higher levels of achievement, (especially in the English language), as well as higher paying jobs and more employment opportunities in the future. In other words, parents are presented a supposedly irreconcilable dichotomy between native culture and language (the essence of their world) and improved education and economic development; at the same time, they have no information to use in consideration of this issue. While there is an extensive knowledge and research base to support native language programs, there are many reasons to explain why this information is not accessible to the native community. One of the most obvious reasons is that the information is available only in English, often in technical and academic terms, and the literacy level of the community does not permit the necessary level of comprehension for easy access. This problem of accesibility occurs whether the information is presented as text or in other formats. This fact alone should give rise to the question of the moral responsibility on the part of educators as to how they fulfill their functions as "teachers". In this review, only one article explicitly addressed this issue of a dichotomy between culture/language development education and economic development (Robinson, 1985).

Bibliographies, Lists and Directories (18) had their own category. These items offer a list of who's who in native education, not only in the person, but in the places, and sometimes, in the views. Most of the titles represent information on resources available in the field of native education and native studies at all levels. Besides bibliographies of material and books, for example, there are listings of pertinent theses from the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan (Barnett and Dyer, 1983; Ramratten and Kach, 1985). Some items list organizations and agencies which work with or serve native people (Benally, 1990; University of Lethbridge, 1984) and others list native programs (More, 1981; More, 1983).

Sixteen articles addressed the relationship between classroom learning and culture. Most of these expressed recognition and support for an integrated model of curriculum and teaching methods which reflects native value systems and cultures (e.g. Elofson and Elofson, 1988). While the recommendation for cultural relevancy is strong in these articles, there is virtually nothing to assist us in actually bringing this change about. Two articles reflect specific efforts to make the curriculum meaningful to a native group of students (Kawagley, 1990; Steele, 1989).

In my own work and experience as a native educator, it is generally in discussion of cultural relevancy in curriculum wherein the comment will arise that "Indians must choose either culture or quality education." There were no articles in this category to indicate this view, but then, realistically, who would state this view in this day of multiculturalism as official policy and international rejection of racism? It is, however, the type of statement being made in staffrooms and lounges after school hours although it will probably never be published in educational periodicals. Nevertheless, it remains a part of present native education.

Eleven articles categorized under Special Education focused on native students with exceptional needs. Five of these articles addressed areas of special needs wherein being native was a factor of some significance (Duqette, 1988; Phillips and Cranwell, 1988; Common and Frost, 1988, Miles and Ratzloff, 1988, Laverelt, 1983). Six articles addressed special education needs as a normal part of any educational system. There were two articles which addressed topic of broad significance. These were teacher expectations and attitudes and intelligence tests with respect to native students. One study demonstrated that teachers displayed a positive bias towards Caucasian or Oriental Special Education students referred, and a negative bias towards North American Indian referral (Meyles and Ratzlaff, 1988). Another paper identified the need to develop more appropriate ways to assess native students' intelligence other than using the standard Wechsler Intelligence Scale. This instrument tends to measure the degree of acculturation rather than personal capability (Common and Frost, 1988).

The category of evaluations had 15 articles, nine of which were reports or evaluations of schools on Indian reserves. Most of these schools were band-controlled, or in the process of moving towards band control. Seven of these reports were conducted by Riffel and Sealey between 1984 and 1987 and focused on educational services in reserve schools of northern Manitoba. Problem areas identified and recommended changes for improvement were generally repeated from one community to the other. Concerns with achievement, academic standards, relevant programming, and community parent involvement seemed to apply generally. The linkages between economic development and education was brought to the fore in the report on Lake Manitoba Indian Reserve (Riffel and Sealey, 1985), and implicit in most of the other evaluations. Of the two remaining school evaluation reports, one was totally positive in discussing the effects of band and community control of education (Gardener, 1986) and the second (Hamilton and Owston, 1983) reflected similar concerns as those cited by Riffel and Sealey. The remaining six articles discussed school and program evaluation models, and included one discussion of teacher supervision in a native context, and one native language program evaluation report (Hebert, 1984; Este, 1984; Wilcox, 1984: Hebert, 1986; Owston, 1986).

History as a category included all of those articles which addressed native people or education for natives in a historical sense. Of thirteen articles, two addressed Indian education (Adams, 1988; Hamilton, 1986), two discussed the French view of Indians (Bennett and Jaenen, 1984; Jaenan, 1984) and five articles found something of significance to native education in a discussion of Metis and the fur trade (Brown, 1983; Dickeson, 1982; Judd, 1982; Peterson, 1982; Ray, 1982).

The remaining categories, of ten or less articles, I will group for discussion as follows:

> Group A-literature (9 articles), achievement (7); counseling (8); learning styles (5), university students (7), technology (5), alternate programs (5), music and musicology (5), health (4), journals and literary selections (6) and English as a Second Language (3).
>
> Group B-local control (10), governance (9), and community and development (8).

Articles in group A address specific areas of interest within the context of native education. They reflect varying degrees of knowledge and understanding about research, native people, and native education in general. This work can and will help to mold the shape of education for native students, but none of these areas of specialized focus will contain the necessary social, political, or educational impetus to determine the framework or set the direction for native education in the future. These comments would apply as well to articles under the categories already discussed, with the exception of those 23 articles under government reports/documents.

While this step in this particular process may appear as though I am denigrating this collection of work, or prioritizing content, that is certainly not my intent. I am attempting to organize this material for easier communication of my thoughts. It is imperative that we recognize as educators that these articles address only some of the specific pieces, and we will not see the whole until we can respectfully set aside these pieces. This body of work, Group A, is necessary, but the development of a framework for native education cannot begin with the assumption that we have identified all the pieces simply because these are the ones selected for study or comment by the writers. In seeking to contribute to an analysis of native education, it would be unwise for me to limit my view and my discussion to only those parts which have been identified by other people as being pertinent to native education, and the discussion of which, over the last decade at least, has led us essentially nowhere.

It is on the basis of this premise that I have grouped the articles listed under Group B. For this grouping, I include those articles under government reports/documents, and the five articles listed under the "general' category as being non-specific but which address the broader aspects of native education.

These 27 articles reflect the work which most directly addresses the community perspective, and the community is central to almost all of these discussions.

The community studies seem to be focused on issues of autonomy, not only in education but equally in social and economic development and in stabilization of themselves as a people maintaining a culture and a tradition in their own environment (Cozzetto, 1990; Green, 1990; Walton, 1989; Cloutier, 1988; Guillory, 1988; Rossel, 1988; Versey, 1987; Kirkness, 1985; Wonders, 1984). Some of the largest, most incomprehensible, impediments to native communities in their efforts to address these issues come through government policies and decisions. These can threaten development, and even survival, of native communities (Cozzetto, 1990; McKenzie, 1989; Cloutier, 1988; Rossell, 1988; Ryan, 1988; Wards, 1986; Kirkness, 1985; Charles, 1982; Charles, 1981; LaRocque, 1978). Education is simply one process wherein the activities are expected to support the continuing vitality of a community, and this has always been the perspective of native educators who lived with and maintained links with their communities, as well as of those who are still drifting with a sense of loss of self-identity, and of those who have chosen to assimilate and bury that part of themselves which is rooted in the native community. Further, it would be erroneous to think that these individuals are identified by place of residence, life-style, or words.

From the perspective of government, as indicated in the documents included in this review, the importance of community involvement is recognized and supported. This support, is focused clearly on parent/community involvement in the schools and it should be kept in mind that most of the content of these reports is based on community interviews. Unfortunately, any potential for government policies to promote positive growth in native education seems to continually fall apart with implementation and practise. It appears that the few policies which pertain to native people and are based on community level discussions (Alberta, 1985) lose their meaning in the development of implementation processes. Procedure and administrative practise essentially undermine and/or destroy the possibilities for educational development to proceed along the lines of community intent and goals.

While denouncing the government for manipulative control tactics and assimilationist goals may, in some ways, be an easier position to maintain, this is exactly what would lead to isolationism. Isolationism will never come from models or policies which permit native communities to determine their own goals, and devise their own systems and ways of "fitting"[1] with the larger

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[1] Fitting, as used here, should not be interpreted to mean "fitting in" which would imply a strictly assimilationist perspective.

Canadian society, despite that stated fear (Alberta, 1984). Isolationism will come from future generations of native people who will not have learned from their own people the interrelatedness of all life. They will have learned instead the lessons of the non-native society as portrayed in their systems, and these are not based on a state of interconnectedness, or co-existence.

I am not suggesting that my review of this information demonstrates a general recognition amongst the writers of the importance of the native community in the future of native education. Obviously, I set up the system of categories on which to build my discussion. Because my own experience as a native educator has brought most of these topics to my personal sphere of knowledge or awareness, I find that the wide range of topics and the positions of the writers indicates the predominance of the view that "native education is a problem". The problem seems to be that "the native people keep failing so we must work harder to find a way to education them".

Because of the way that non-native people define native people and native education, any major changes must come from government. Any involvement of the native community in "native education" is to ensure that these changes reflect their own non-native perceptions of "the problem". The native people, on the other hand, stress that responsibility for education of native children should rest with their parents and communities. Community involvement then, to native people, implies something quite different. Because it can appear as if government policy supports this position of native people, but administration and implementation does not reflect this purpose, the issue that arises becomes one of political control.

The source of this issue lies in the differing view of the non-native and native individuals who face each other in daily real-life contact. However, what this translates into, in visible and tangible ways, is the on-going debate between non-native and native political bodies, each of which may or may not reflect this community-based focus for education.

The people who lose the most in this focus on political debate are inevitably the children and the people at home in the community.

What emerges is the reality where we as educators debate about how better to define the "problems" of schooling native children. In practise, we struggle with proposed solutions and the power to implement them. We all think that our solution deserves to be tried first. This we will continue to do until we come to some agreement and mutual understanding of the definition and guiding principles for native education. Otherwise, development in native education will continue to rest with politicians, and the children must wait. It is important to point out that I am in no way de-emphasizing the importance of resolving the legal issues around the questions of jurisdictional responsibility, control, status, land, or self-government. Nor am I de-emphasizing the fact that the Native population includes many different languages, lifestyles, and belief systems. These are the contexts for any serious developments in the future of Native education. Nonetheless, as educators, we cannot wait for the settlement of land claims and jurisdictional issues with regard to aboriginal peoples before we give meaning to the term native education. Waiting does not serve native people in any way. In times when educational development must wait for political decisions, and the native people support a position of non-involvement with education as a strategem of political strength, then educators will have no choice but to wait anyway.

As for today, educators are still searching for solutions with the assumption that they have identified the problems. Educational research is based on native children in a schooling context in the same manner that government policy is based on community surveys. It rarely occurs to the individuals involved in this work that, if they are not native, what they observe and interpret from one situation will not be the same as the observations and interpretations which will be made by a native person on the same situation. The stagnancy which this creates is surely an ethical and moral issue that educators should recognize. When we accept responsibility for children, we cannot choose to be cognitively blind.

The problem is not "out there" in native education or with native people, or non-native people. The problem and the solution lies within ourselves as individuals. We can analyze but we must recognize that we use an information base to do this. This information base is not "out there" somewhere; it is inside of us as individual human beings. Because we have built these shared descriptions by which to communicate with each other, we assume that what we discuss is internal to us and in some way "objective". This leads us into the larger error of assuming that everyone can see what we see. In fact, another group of individuals will have undergone the same process within their society, and their information bases and shared description will be totally different. Different cultures and different languages should be an obvious signal that different worlds have been shaped. Whether different societies can live together and maintain a state of harmony and balance is probably dependent on the contents of their information bases inherent to each one. These information bases incorporate value-systems, and individual and collective consciousness.

It would seem to be a worthwhile first step for all educators involved in native education to consider whether the value system of their society supports co-existence with other societies and cultures. Determining this is not an easy process, but it might , for non-native educators, provide them with the opportunity to undergo the process of defining themselves as cultural beings. In so doing, it would enable them to become a part of the native education experience, not as an intellectual exercise which assumes one society, but as an active way of being with a different society. Native education struggles to become a system of new patterns and new ways of organizing a native child's learning environment. These must be new ways because if they happen, they will be created from a new state of co-existence between two different parts.

Chapter 7

Reflections on Teaching

I have shared some of my experiences as a native teacher in interaction with students, but I have not specifically described or addressed education issues through reflections on my teaching experiences. Being certified as a teacher did not change me as a person. The act of teaching was the force which demanded personal growth and change. In this chapter, I will address my commentary to this statement.

The perspective from a native teacher's point of view depends on whether I am teaching or not. Being labelled a "teacher" did not change my position as a native person outside the schooling society. I was still observing and learning about the non-native world without feeling that I had the right or obligation or responsibility to affect any change. There was interaction, but no dialogue with the people of that society, at least not in the manner in which I would use the term.

Until I went into a classroom, I could avoid any major personal shifts in my own view of the world. I could avoid connecting with non-native persons, especially since they did not seem to need or want any connection with me. When I accepted a teaching position, however, I placed myself into that different society, and essentially stated that I would own my share of responsibility for what this schooling experience did for -or to- our children for as long as I was a participant in that capacity. Native teachers who choose to teach are never in the neutral position of simply teaching because they must either promote the goals of the schooling society and therefore of that institution, or promote the development of their own beings and that of their own society. There is no such thing as avoiding that choice, consciously or unconsciously. The fallacy that schooling is a politically neutral act is still too much accepted by the schooling society, especially by the teachers who represent the membership of that society. There is no teaching which can avoid being clothed in societal colors, and conducted in a manner supporting specific societal ideologies and belief systems.

What makes it easy for the non-native teachers to "just teach", in a supposedly neutral position, is that the schooling process is built upon their own societal colors, ideologies and belief systems. Because this schooling process defines the student-teacher relationship in terms of control and management with the teacher holding the authority, there is almost a guarantee that, within the superficial confines of the classroom, there will be no opportunity to jar this teacher into "seeing" the students who are members of a different society. The existence, however, of a native teacher as a colleague or a school staff raises tensions all around. Whether this tension leads to positive or negative results is entirely the result of the individual and personal decisions of each member of the staff, whether native or non-native. Decisions by persons in a state of interconnectedness lead to consensus and positive growth; decisions by persons who are separated and disconnected lead to rule by majority, stagnation, and decay.

When I started teaching, I began my internal journey of learning how to love the person of my non-native colleague while rejecting and opposing his methods of relating to native students in a dehumanizing and disrespectful manner. He, of course, did not see things in this way. It was a journey of personal suffering, but I began to learn and understand the endless quality of the lessons of native interconnectedness or Christian compassion between human beings.

As a native teacher, actively involved in teaching native students, I found myself facing the overwhelming task of integrating two systems of education into some form which would have meaning for native children. Needless to say, I went into this activity and accepted this responsibility with no specific preparatory training from either society. In fact, I went into this position without the level of personal understanding that was required for the task. Over the years, through my own process of self-development, my understanding and awareness of the immensity and the near impossibility of this form of integration became clear.

Any efforts on my part to develop meaningful "cross-cultural" educational methods or resources were met with hostility, non-support, or ridicule. Non-native teaching colleagues were the strongest and most vehement opponents. I had been carrying some naive notions from university training that educators were interested in the welfare and beings of all children. University professors said "the relationship between the teacher and the child (or student) is key to the student's academic success"; they did not say "the relationship between the teacher and the child *of our own society* is key to the students' academic success". Obviously, we all need clarification on these occasions!

It was after some time and experience that I learned in retrospect that I should have expected animosity from my colleagues. Most of what I said and did called into question their whole approach to teaching native children. That their competence and knowledge (to them, their beings) could be questioned by a native person was an unthinkable insult.[1] The educators had to live with me, and what seemed to make any form of reconciliation or united effort impossible was that my very existence validated my arguments that a native person could be "educated" and still reflect a different belief system and a different society. That I was in a classroom which represented their society and was presumptuous enough to think that our own ways of defining the world had a place there, challenged their whole existence and belief system.

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[1] It would be more fair to insert at this point, however, that the most vicious and reprehensible form of opposition to my presumptuous and "uppity" approach to education came from some non-native school trustees, businessmen, and government officials, not educators.

Because I chose to work in schools, I had to decide whether my energy was to be devoted to teaching children, or to attempting to build connections with a disinterested group of colleagues. It became many years of working alone in a context of disharmony and imbalance. This type of personal pressure was eased somewhat during those years where there was at least one other native person on the teaching staff, but this was rare. Today, I know that many native teachers are still working under these alienating and personally debilitating conditions.

These conditions persist, not because there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the need for cross-cultural understanding in the schooling context, but because this understanding is dependent upon the non-native teacher's choice to embark upon that long and difficult process of self-development. This process would lead the teacher into a recognition that his society has demanded the negation of his own being. If this realization is admitted or faced, the terror of restructuring his reality and believing in himself as a being separate from but integral to his society can be paralyzing in a non-supportive environment.

In the context of native education, a non-native teacher will find himself in a situation which demands the ultimate act of human compassion - he must love a child enough that his love will free his own being from a system which requires his own dying. There is an indescribable horror in the way that a civilization which claims a Christian foundation has not given its own children the life-giving force of the teachings of its own Christ. If it had, we would all have realized by now that the essence of Christianity reflects a life which is no different than a life lived through traditional native religions. It is not because of superficial understanding or "simple faith" that an old Indian grandfather will adhere to his traditional rituals in relationship to the Creator, and will, at the same time, carry a crucifix. This is the deep understanding acquired through living his traditions that the essential message of Christ, "love and compassion for one's neighbor" lies at the core of all human existence on this planet. The native state of "interconnectedness" implies nothing less. The personal and individual attainment of these states of being require passage through the same gates, regardless of which path a cultural trail follows. When a teacher accepts responsibility to teach children, in whatever context, teacher and students must be connected at a deeper level than can be achieved through language, curriculum, methodology, or physical space. If this connection of "beings", "selves", "spirits" does not exist, none of the other parts alone, in conjunction with each other, or altogether will be strong enough to establish this relationship. If this relationship cannot be established, there is no enhancement of life or human development for either the child or the teacher. It then becomes the ethical and moral responsibility of the adult to remove himself from affecting the life of the child. A child, no matter of what cultural group, is open to this connection; it is the adult who holds the power to choose to establish this connection or not. If he does not, and cannot, perhaps from his own lack of self-understanding or lack of personal courage, establish this necessary base for teaching and learning, then it becomes the moral responsibility of the child's guardians to remove this adult from his position. From my perspective, this point is easy to understand. From my experience, this approach to native education is almost impossible to implement. Without authority, however, to implement such action, there is no hope for a system of education which supports and promotes human development.

I have focused on the native experience with schooling because I know that way. I also know that native traditions and teachings will ensure and support our survival as a people. By their very nature, they sustain all life of all cultures. I have learned, however, that the educational system, representative of a different society, destroys the opportunity for our future generations to acquire these necessary traditions and teachings in any form. By accepting enforced confinement of our young children under the watchful eye and training of dispassionate guards, or even sympathetic guards, we place our children into prison camps of psychological and spiritual genocide. In my student days, the school was definitely "out there". I studied school as a foreign institution while I learned the skills I needed. I was safely ensconced, however, in my own being in my own world. Today's native child faces a different and far more dangerous reality in being "schooled". We cannot isolate the educational system from the other service agencies and effects which also are representative of that same society which is different from ours. When the school was the only foreign institution in our lives, it was a place of interest; native people are superb anthropologists who rarely publicize their findings.

Consider, however, the impact on a small native community when the ideologies and belief systems of the institution of education are supported by health services, formalized social services, economic development projects, housing and forms of land tenure, along with new forms of local government, human resource development, major industrial projects, and the television set. In my own community, the arrival of these "improvements" ripped apart my reality in a space of eight to ten years. Of course, I did not attribute anything negative or destructive to these signs of "progress" until one day when I arrived home for the weekend from high school. I was 16 years old, but what I experienced was the first shattering blow to the foundation of my belief in man's interconnectedness, not only with each other but with nature. The trees which had sheltered and talked to me for all of my life, the moss and flowers which had held me with laughter and tears through my growing up; the delicate ferns that rarely changed their homes were all gone; torn from the breast of their Mother, their beauty broken and left in a shapeless mass of twisted wood and torn earth. There was no suffering there, only an unfathomable emptiness as the rain poured down endlessly, trying to wash away the shame of the act. A monument of desolation to an unnatural mind.

I remembered all the birds who had nested there and let me watch as they raised their young ones, over the years, and the butterflies who used to land their sticky grip on my fingers, wafting their wings to the sun. I remembered all of us who had called this home.

I felt guilty because I had been away, and I should have been there to stop that destruction. At the same time, I knew I could have done nothing - that was part of the pain. When I finished crying, I went back to the town and back into school, but a part of my strength had been replaced by a stillness which comes with unbearable grief.

This was my first lesson in facing the effects of the insatiable greed and disrespect for life which this "other society" seemed to hold. What I described was the first step of a new form of land tenure and housing for our community. Out of that evolved the many social and personal problems of native people who are coerced into living unnaturally on each other's doorsteps in a treeless environment with no thought to family structure or the effects of destroying a traditional economic base and replacing it with a "welfare system".

The effects of modernization on small northern communities have been discussed and elaborated upon in many formats and with models of analysis which allow accurate and clear descriptions of native social reality. For that reason, I do not intend to delve further into this aspect other than to point out that an understanding of education for native students cannot be separated from an understanding of the social, political, and economic realities of their lives. It should be clear that, in my way, my life had been spared the tragic and personal consequences of having my educational experiences impacted heavily by the changes which came into my community. These changes had the greatest physical and social impact after I had left for further schooling. I had not been robbed of a foundation for my self-development. This was certainly not so for the generation which followed me. It was into the context of reality of these students that I returned as a teacher and in which I and every other educator of native students find themselves today.

Just as the success of a child depends on the opportunities he is given for his own development, just so does the success of a teacher depend on his own level of self-development. The individual does hold the keys to shape the world, any world. If we assume, and I do, that education is the process which helps an individual child to attain that consciousness of personal responsibility and provides the opportunities for that individual to acquire the means to express that responsibility within his own society, then it would be logical to state unequivocally that native education, if it is to serve native students, has fallen short of its goal.

That is the positive view of native education. If however, native education is to prepare native students to fit into the society which is represented by the schooling process, then native education has failed totally.

If native education is meant to prepare native students for their own society, it has failed because the teachers, predominantly non-native, are unable to recognize that the students are members of a different culture and therefore do not "see" the world in the same way that the teacher does. We continue to expect and treat the educated professional teacher as if he is somehow above the ethnocentricity which he continually imparts through the whole educational process. Over time, in the education of native children, we would be able to solve the problems around meaningful curriculums, methodology, space, and standards and language. But, we will never solve the problem of the teacher who holds the view that his way of defining the world, and his society, are in fact the only real world that exists. That is a problem which lies within that individual teacher and until it is faced by that teacher, I see no possibility for changes.

If native education is meant to prepare native students for the society of the school, then it has failed because, within itself, and its representative teacher, it has no means of accessing the native reality of the children. More importantly, it has no means of touching the spirit, the psyche, or the self of the child. Until this connection happens, and even though the most abject levels of poverty and despair may surround him, the native child will continue to see the school and the teacher as another different and incompatible society. His system can incorporate the most brutal realities that the non-native world can bring into his life, but he himself will never become a non-native.

It is important, however, to also recognize that an observer of native schooling in process will probably be quick to point out many examples which may validate or call into question my analysis. There will be hundreds of "good" or "nice" teachers, and there may be hundreds of children "happy" in school and learning "well". Recall my position is that native education has failed, no matter how it is defined or for what purpose it was designed. A native student will reflect a native reality. He will, however, like all children, be unconscious of this difference between himself and the non-native teacher until he is older. Until then, he will be open to learning new ways if the opportunities are provided in a way which does not create inner personal conflict. Therefore, "good" teachers can produce "good" students. By the junior or senior high school years, however, we can observe the results of this method of "teaching". It becomes clear that something about the school learning that occurred was very superficial and has not in fact touched the being of the child in such a way as to assist him toward a consciousness of himself as a responsible member of his society. The learning he may have acquired which does help him is often not connected with schooling at all.

I doubt that anyone would disagree with me that native education has been and continues to be a failing process. Even if we called it "native schooling", it would still be a failure. Any denial would need to refute volumes of related statistics which include low employment, penal system population studies, income level statistics, as well as educational studies of student attrition, absenteeism, and achievement.

I am not forgetting those "successes" who serve as native role-models for non-natives. That these few satisfy the authorities of our education system tells me that they hold very serious doubts about the level of intelligence amongst the general native population. That one belief, by itself, creates a wave of undermining influences. Nonetheless, these "successes" are those native people who go through schooling to some level of non-native acceptance, and end up as "contributing and worthwhile members of society". Society in this sense means the non-native society. It is sad to see that some of these native people who accept this description of themselves live superficial but comfortable lives as "successful" members of the non-native society. They must also, as we can all observe, "know their place"; they are an inferior social class in the view of the non-native. The results on the native society and on any meaningful attempts to develop sound native education are hindered by native persons who accept this subservient position. They are held up to the native society as "good Indians" who "get along with everyone". They rarely fight against or question the judgments or the ways of the "white man", at least not to his face. They say exactly what we all know he wants to hear. These native people teach all of us that to live comfortably and be accepted by the non-native society, native persons must live superficial lives; we must jump through prescribed hoops, conduct ourselves socially as lesser and subservient persons, and express appreciation and reliance on the non-native for our physical existence. This is what we see that the non-native desires in exchange for his also superficial acceptance. He does have the money and the authority to "keep" us.

Native people who choose this form of "success" are positioned in all levels of non-native society and its institutions, including the recent and dangerous forms and institutions of "aboriginal self-government".

I am also not forgetting those "successes" who achieve, again, some "acceptable" level of schooling, and maintain their personal integrity as native persons. These people maintain and sustain the integrity of the native society and its way of being in the world. This is not an easy road because the non-native society never relinquishes its stranglehold on any society which declares itself distinct, separate, different. This genocidal approach is, of course, made more difficult by those native persons who, unknowingly, support such intentional or unintentional designs.

Despite these difficulties however, these native people continue to live in a manner which is true to their own way of being in the world, and therefore their commitment is not only to their own society, but to all humanity. These persons, too, are positioned at all levels of the non-native social hierarchy, and within the institutions of either society.

I have presented two portraits of adult native persons who were judged to have been "successful" in the schooling process. These portraits are drawn with a suggestion of extreme and harsh inflexibility. The point I am making is that native people and non-native people do not share the same views of the label "successful". Persons within these societies do not see similar options nor similar results arising from "success", nor do they hold similar personal feelings about his particular state of accomplishment. Between these two extremes of "successful" native persons lies the full spectrum of human behavior and human response demonstrating native people's survival over the experiences of enforced contact with the non-native world.

Underlying this superficial veneer and non-native style of describing people as "successes" or "failures", based on schooling and employment, lies the native reality. This is our unshakeable foundation of individual respect and acceptance which is lived by the majority of native people, completely outside of the foreign concept of "success". These people provide the force of strength which carries all of us, non-native and native, in the struggle towards the human realization of interconnectedness. Through the power of their compassion, we are drawn into that compelling desire to accept our individual and personal need to be part of a world which permits and sustains all life, especially our own.

I have demonstrated that the individual being of the teacher is crucial to the process of education, especially the process of native education. It is the individual who must first integrate within himself his experiences including those within his community, with all other persons, and with nature. In the formation of this integrated Self, he can be open to the teaching experience as an act of interconnectedness, an act of the spirit, and act of love. Interconnectedness does not demand fragmentation or less of Self; it permits the expansion and experience of Self.

All of this I have said in order to place my comments on teachers, especially where I've particularly singled out non-native teachers, into some context of thought.

This separation between teachers of two societies is not based on race. It is based on those teachers who have discerned that they are not "the institution" and that they can and need to experience their own "beings" in this exercise of teaching, and those teachers who have not discerned this. Naturally, native teachers will not ever see themselves as "the institution" of schooling because this institution is not of their society.

They must be aware, however, so that they don't fall into a second "teacher-trap". That one happens when a teacher simply practises what the Institution describes as teaching. Teaching becomes a number of actions following prescribed methods, contents, and even personal behavior. The act of teaching follows a prescription provided by the institution. I have never seen a standard classroom or a standard student for whom this prescription will work. Exactly because native teachers do not see "the institution" as themselves, it may mean that this trap is more dangerous for them than for non-native teachers. They may see themselves as "incapable or incompetent" teachers if they don't "fit" the stereotype that the institution describes. This conceivably arises because they are members of an "inferior" society. However, as would be true for any other teachers, their success in avoiding or breaking this trap rests on their own confidence and belief in the expression of their own beings; it depends on self-development and self-awareness within the framework of their own respective societies.

My reflections on education and schooling have led me to one conclusion. In order to effect necessary major changes to native education today, and to simultaneously move it in a positive direction, an essential and radical shift must take place in the frame of mind of everyone involved. This cognitive shift must take place in the individual. It may be prompted through individual or group experience; it may be planned or unplanned. However it happens, we must individually assess our "knowledge about knowledge" as part of our human process, and we must determine the connection between our different social realities and our different ways of shaping these realities. Through all of this, our individuality may unfold through new levels of meaning in our lives, new levels which will enable us to shape more self-respecting societies.

Written information on the topic of native education, as represented in the ERIC database, presents very little in the way of addressing directly the questions which I have raised throughout this work. While the perspective and topics which are required for meaningful research amay be intimated throughout the literature specific to native education, these often appear in a context which implies that the writer(s) is unaware of these potential insights and necessary redirections. What comes to mind in explaining this condition are the words of Maturana and Varela:

> By existing, we generate cognitive 'blind spots' that can be cleared only through generating new blind spots in another domain. We do not see what we do not see, and what we do not see does not exist. Only when some interaction dislodges us - such as being suddenly relocated to a different cultural environment - and we reflect upon it, do we bring forth new constellations of relations that we explain by saying that we were not aware of them, or that we took them for granted. (1987:242)

This "dislodging", and necessary "reflection", constitute what I earlier referred to as a shift in one's frame of mind. Reflection must and does normally enter the process when the standard cultural practices fail to serve the individual and his social group.

In many ways I have presented a picture of native education as a process whose movements are very much determined and crippled by a cultural impasse. One culture or society subsumes its individuals into itself and its institutions, and does not "see" the existence of any other society. The second culture or society strengthens the individual as its own foundation, and "sees" the world as composed of many different, interconnected, societies, not necessarily all human. Both societies are naturally driven by the desire to ensure their own survival through their young.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

I began this work with the individual as the focus of my discussion. While this process has led me into a deeper understanding of the issues around education for native people, the conclusion I have reached is that it is necessary to maintain my focus on the development of the individual. Only this focus allows for a possible synthesis of the issues which I have identified, directly or indirectly, as permeating the experience of native education.

While the review of the information derived from the ERIC database led me into one type and level of discussion, the narratives around my childhood and student days followed a different path. My intent was to demonstrate that native education, in its development as a concept, was not based in the native reality, nor did it evolve, in terms of implementation, into an approach or practise which reflects or serves the aspirations of native people.

There were parts within the narrative which reflected my experience in "native" education. The teachers were my parents, my grandparents, and the people and nature around me. Other parts of the narrative reflected native experiences of schooling. These would not be identified as native education by anyone's definition, at least not according to the popular conception of native education as a positive and conciliatory move by the larger Education system.

I have addressed my own reflections to the experience of native education from the context of my own reality. What I will do now is bring forward the work of some non-native writers who seem to offer a structure of thought and a description of their world which does not demonstrate exclusivity. In fact, these writers have enabled me to see my own being reflected in theirs. They joined my own people in providing me with intelligent reasons and spiritual support to maintain my faith in humanity. My own people before me, my own people after me, and these, my new teachers, never let me forget who I am and who I am related to.

I have always been intrigued by the way that some non-native writers will describe the native experience of the relationship between the individual and the collective. Sometimes individuals in society cannot "hear" the words of someone who is not a member of their society, and, so I refer you to the work of Theodore Roszak in Person/Planet for an excellent discussion of the relationship between "person" (I have used the word individual) and his society and what this relationship means to the Planet.

Essentially, Roszak's message is one that stresses the significance and the necessity of personhood for planetary survival. This personhood is based on a process of self-discovery. He describes personhood as being constantly violated by "mystification" (p.310-311) and in describing what the person faces in his society, he says "they are being tricked into forgetting that they are persons born to the right of self-discovery" (p.310).

His description reveals a non-native view of the same non-native society which I have been discussing. His whole work is an effort (and a call to his own people) to humanize their society's institutions (p.315), and an appeal to individuals in that society to recognize that their own need for self-discovery is also "the Earth's urgent cry for rescue" (p.320). Throughout the book his theme carries the message that the vitality of the Earth is linked inextricably with the vitality of the person.

This is a non-native describing his own society and its propensity to destroy the "person". Roszak's terminology is different than mine. He links "individual" with "individualism" and "person" with "self-discovery". I have used the word "individual" or "person" and linked both with "self-discovery" or "self-development". Roszak's arguments for self-discovery as a necessary and worthwhile process for a "person" is no different than my arguments for the same process as necessary for the "individual".[1]

Discussing the "person" in education, Roszak describes approaches that have been used in attempts to recognize the full rights of the person in education (p.191-192). He points out why "alternative schools" have not, and probably will not in the future, have any more success than the "standard schools" in supporting the human search for "personhood". In describing the basis of alternate schools, he says it is escapist, "by non-whites from white culture, by the poor from middle class values, (and) by children from adults in general." He sees the results of this approach as "an enclave of stranded young resentment" (p. 191). The focus of alternate schools, then, is reactionary to external reality, and not as we might suppose a focus on student self-development or internal growth. His comments on Paulo Freire's "lead" imply a lack of understanding of Freire's approach to education; nevertheless, his comments on using "schools for political consciousness raising" are valid in my view.

Paulo Freire focuses on an approach whereby the individual achieves personal freedom from an internalized oppression of external circumstances. Roszak suggests, however, that people followed his "lead" by "developing alternate schools for political consciousness-raising among the disadvantaged youth and their parents". The goal of these schools is strictly to achieve political control of the "downtown administration rather as if it were the Czar's Winter Palace." This leads to a loss of "creative energy to political factionalism." Roszak's point is that "self-discovery needs more than agitational anger to grow on....Besides freedom 'from', we need freedom 'for' (p. 191).

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[1] In Roszak's description of "individualism" (p.104-106), I find nothing to contradict my own description of the "individual" involved in a process of individualization or self-discovery. In fact, what Roszak describes as "individualism" also describes the person in native society who is "selfish", doesn't know himself, and contributes nothing to the society but imbalance. For his use of the term "individual", I would chose the word "individualist".

I started this section with reference to this book by Roszak because his style of writing is straightforward and easy to follow. He described things the way that they are in "the real world". "The real world" in this case it the "non-native world" - "Euro-Canadian society" - "dominant society" - "white society" - "American society" - "Canadian society" - "larger society". At any rate, we have all learned which society is often refered to by its members singularly as "the" Society. "The real world" in this case is also my interpretation of what I have experienced in that society he describes. That society seems to have no place for Roszak's "person" or my "individual".

While I was working in schools, it was not in the context of work that I acquired the English words to explain and to understand, or to describe my experiences. It was not through discussion and dialogue with any masters. It was through the written word. These words, however, would have been empty had I not been open to the experiences of my everyday "real world". There were three books which propelled me forward at critical periods of my life when I felt myself sinking into that abyss of no-meaning. The first one was In Search of the Miraculous by P.D. Ouspensky. This man was a Russian mathematician and philosopher whose writings were first published in 1909. This particular work was published in 1949, and is mostly a record, with Ouspensky's commentary, of his experiences under Georges Gurdjieff, a teacher of a special school where a man learns to "know himself". Ouspensky found this teacher after years of searching throughout Europe, Egypt, and the Orient for answers to the problems of "Man and the Universe". Whether I accepted this teacher's arrangement and description of the world was irrelevant at the time of reading. The book was filled with ideas and concepts which exhilarated my dying spirit and gave me new ways to perceive a world-view that I could not understand and experiences that did not make sense.

The second book which helped to ground me in "reality" was the classic by Evelyn Underhill, simply entitled Mysticism. I had given up on the world, and I wasn't convinced that I had to go back into it. There had to be another lake way back in the bush somewhere where I wouldn't have to "see" and I wouldn't have to "feel" what societies were doing. Fortunately, from my position of retreat, this woman gathered me up in her words and explained the process of the mystic's journey from beginning to end. It made perfect and beautiful meaning of some very ugly experiences. She introduced me to people (writers) who had lived and suffered without losing faith and compassion for humanity. I branched out in my thinking to people such as William James, and the early Christian writers, St John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila.

The third writer who pulled me from insanity was an anonymous person who wrote for the benefit of a young person considering a life of contemplation. That it was worded in the language of a very closed and traditional church did not conceal the message or obscure the meaning for me in my own life. This work was The Cloud of Unknowing, a tiny book whose effects would be lost to a person who hurriedly assigned it to "dogma" or "religion". The message was the starkness of the human spirit in its persistent striving to break through the cloud of knowing, to find the nothingness that is God.

Now that I have given recognition to these three teachers, I want to point out simply that it was not the questions of "native education", "education", or "culture" that kept me on my own journey of self-discovery. I was looking for answers to questions about the meaning of life in my own being. I needed new words to explain new internal processes and experiences. These experiences of my own inner being had to be named in order for me to think about them and understand them.

There were other writers who helped me, not so much with internal processes directly, but with thinking about human behavior and human interaction in societies, and thinking about thinking processes, knowledge and mind.

Albert Camus in Resistance, Rebellion and Death lent his words from his own experience. Justin O'Brien says in his introduction to the book that Camus's essays addressed "perennially current issues" that compelled him to speak out in 1956 and 1958:

> war and resistance in a Europe dominated by prisons, executions, and exile; the tragedies of Algeria and Hungary; the horror of the death penalty; and the writer's commitment (1961:vii).

The names of places have changed, but the situation has not.

Camus describes how people who live with hatred and abuse consistently over a period of time, are necessarily left with hatred. In the French experience,

> we were left with the rage that consumes our souls at the memory of certain images and certain faces. The executioners' hatred engendered the victims' hatred. And once the executioners had gone, the French were left with their hatred only partially spent. They still look at one another with a residue of anger.
>
> Well, this is what we must overcome first of all. Our poisoned hearts must be cured. And the most difficult battle to be won against the enemy in the future must be fought within ourselves, with an exceptional effort that will transform our appetite for hatred into a desire for justice (p. 62-63).

Today we watch our young people being trained for violence and hatred. We may need these words if the lessons are learnt well.

When Camus addresses Christianity, he begins by asking for help.

> Perhaps we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured. But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you don't help us, who else in the world can help us do this?(p.73-74)

He describes the situation as "a great unequal battle" "between the forces of terror and the forces of dialogue" and he has no illusions about the outcome. "The program of the future is either a permanent dialogue or the solemn and significant putting to death of any who have experienced dialogue"(p.73-74).

In discussing economics and freedom, he says on page 94,

> But if someone takes away your freedom, you may be sure that your bread is threatened, for it depends no longer on you and your struggle, but on the whim of a master.... The oppressed want to be liberated not only from their hunger but also from their masters. They are well aware that they will be effectively freed of hunger only when they hold their masters, all their masters, at bay.

Some of Camus' terms, and, certainly these ideas, are developed fully in the language and content of education in the work of Paulo Freire. His book, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, addresses the individual and the social aspects of the educational experience of an "oppressed" people. His pedagogy is based primarily on a process of dialogue.

> Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming - between those who deny other men the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them (p.76).

By naming their world, that is, by the use of the word, men transform their world. "Dialogue imposes itself as the way by which men achieve significance as men" (p. 77). Love, humility and faith are the necessary foundation for dialogue, and it is trust which is established through dialogue. "To say one thing and to do another - to take one's own word lightly - cannot inspire trust" (p. 80). Dialogue also requires hope and engagement between the participants in a process of critical thinking. "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education" (p. 81). Freire places reflection and action as two dimensions within the word. Hence, there is "no true word that is not at the same time a praxis" (p. 81). To dialogue then is to create and re-create the world through naming it, through the word.

It is Freire's discussion of "dialogue" that expresses the ultimate level of communication required between two individuals or two groups if the simultaneous liberation of the oppressor and the oppressed is to be achieved. The effects of oppression on individuals and societies is described in a manner which does not condemn nor judge the actions of any man. The book reflects compassion in a total sense - compassion in the writer and in the words.

Let me leave Freire for now with two passages, and an invitation for you to reflect on them in the context of the native experience:

> Authentic revolution attempts to transform the reality which begets this dehumanizing state of affairs. Those whose interests are served by that reality cannot carry out this transformation; it must be achieved by the tyrannized, with their leaders. This truth, however, must become radically consequential; that is, the leaders must *incarnate* it, through communion with the people (p. 124).
>
> In the process of oppression the elites subsist on the 'living death' of the oppressed and find their authentication in the vertical relationship between themselves and the latter; in the revolutionary process there is only one way for the emerging leaders to achieve authenticity: they must 'die', in order to be reborn with the oppressed (p. 127).

To Freire's beautiful articulation of the concept of communion, I want to add some comments from M. Scott Peck in his book The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace. This writer discusses the building of community amongst individuals of different societies and cultures, as well as amongst individuals of the same society. He describes the two processes of community-building and individual spiritual development as being analogous, and structures his discussion around the stages which a group or an individual will go through in these processes. Peck describes individual spiritual development as culminating in the "mystic, communal" stage. Of mystics, he says,

> among human beings they are the ones most aware that the whole world is a community and realize that what

> divides us into warring camps is precisely the lack of this awareness. Having become practiced at emptying themselves of preconceived notions and prejudices and able to perceive the invisible underlying fabric that connects everything, they do not think in terms of factions or blocs or even national boundaries; they *know* this to be one world (p. 193).

Peck's book is based on his own experience of the interconnectedness of human beings. The highest expression of this interconnectedness is "community". A person who experiences community experiences something

> that is inherently mysterious, miraculous, unfathomable. Thus there is no adequate one-sentence definition of genuine community. Community is something more than the sum of its parts, its individual members....community, like a gem, is multifaceted, each facet a mere aspect of a whole that defies description....The facets of community are interconnected, profoundly interrelated. No one could exist without the other. They create each other, make each other possible (p. 60-61).

What Peck says of the Church (Christian) and its need for commitment is applicable to any group of people who find themselves facing problems which require unified action in the creation of community.

> The process of community-building begins with a commitment - a commitment of the members not to drop out, a commitment to hang in there through thick and thin, through the pain of chaos and emptiness....without that commitment community is impossible (p. 300).

In the introduction to his book, Peck says "I am dubious, however, as to how far we can move toward a global community - which is the only way to achieve international peace - until we learn the basic principles of community in our individual lives and personal spheres of influence" (p. 17-18). After reading through this book, I wondered if I would have understood his message if I had not already experienced "community". Since I had, and further, had been a conscious participant in "community-building" for many years, I wondered how the process would look "on paper", so I read the book. I felt it was true that "it is virtually impossible to describe community meaningfully to someone who has never experienced it" (Peck, 1987:17). Peck's work is one of encouragement and an expression of the hope and faith that community-builders are found in every culture, in every corner of the world, even outside of culture in a way.

However, to describe the experience of community is not as important as the experience itself. It is only significant when the words themselves can draw that inner spark towards the experience of the reality, then descriptions become a part of creating the world. I know, too, that we can live in the experience without the need for words.

It is only when we bump up against an experience which is totally new that we must stop and search for words. That is what constitutes the situation when two societies collide. Individuals from both societies need new words to dialogue and shape a world which allows them to transcend cultural descriptions and yet respect cultural differences. Contact is too mild a term, and connected implies a sharing on the part of both. In my life, societies collide. I have learned the meaning of the power of words to transform and re-create the world; I have shared how I acquired these words. They enabled me to continue my own process of self-development and spiritual development and to understand and commit my life to the building of community.

But I have experienced the pain of hundreds of native people who are being robbed or have been robbed of their words. The collisions with another culture has resulted in the loss of their own words and their own language. They sit in the cold and silence of their own inability to protect themselves against the dehumanizing practices of an imposing culture.This internal blackness becomes their world. The physical reality becomes merely an expression of the loneliness and despair of this void.

The system by which our own words were taken from us and by which we learn the new words is selective as to which new words we learn.[2] The new words, although they have been imposed on us for hundreds of years, have not been able to serve us in defining a new reality. They serve only their own society and further imprison us.

Most of these new words do not allow us to transform and re-create our own world, our own response to another culture. As such, they are useless to us in the task which we consider to be primary to our own beings. That task is a commitment to a process of becoming - becoming as an individual and part of a community. We used our own words for this process, but the opportunity to learn these words has been taken away from many of our children.

Is it surprising that a man will live with the torment of powerlessness when he can't find the words that he needed to learn in his youth. In the context of legislated schooling, a five year old enters a world of new words but he has not yet acquired his own words which he will need to explain what he faces when he is twenty, or thirty, or forty years old. The new words he will learn in six to nine years of schooling will not enable him to act and transform his world. I know if you are a person who has listened to the native people, you will have heard the comment that "our children don't know English and they don't know Cree." We need to reflect carefully on what that means. Perhaps to understand more passionate expressions of anger, or hatred, so reflective of human nature today, we need to recognize the acultural nature of words. Words hold power, and the effects of their use is a personal responsibility within any culture. A system which takes words away from a people is a part of a genocidal process.

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[2] The new words which came primarily through the schooling process have been used as tools to support classification of native people into "the learned" and the "unlearned"... English words -English concepts-English connotations. The agonizing result is the disrespect shown to some of our wisest people, because some of us have found it to our personal advantage to use our English words within this same method of classification. In so doing, we forget the fact that our greatest disrespect is then towards ourselves.

While I have presented my commentary as if I believe we have no words to transform our world, our continuing survival proves that this is not so. Nonetheless, I give more honor to our grandfathers and our grandmothers for their eternal and constant communion with us. This kept us united as a people and as a society in a mystical union which did not need words for the force of its existence. In the searching for and finding of new words in a new language, in our own language, or both languages, we will recreate the expressions of this, our own form of mystical union as a people.

Let me provide an example of how words empower. Since I work in the English language, I am essentially using the English language to name a native experience. I have a great respect for two non-native men who have committed their lives to the "liberation of the oppressed". They work in different ways. One works with his own people predominantly in the hope that they will achieve some degree of understanding of the basis and structure of cultures, one of which is the native society. He attempts through the provision of information to raise consciousness. The other man lives with native people and attempts to participate and share in their reality by contributing his own being. In different discussions with these people, both raised the view that there was no such thing as a "native community". I found their arguments very difficult to refute by words, even though I had experienced what I called "community". I left the discussion with my own task of determining what it was that I named "community", and what it was that they meant by "community". I had heard what they said but I did not understand what they meant. It was a time span of years before I arrived at a place where I think I can now pick up the discussion. My experience had been my own awareness of that mystical union which I have called "communion". It was only some native people who were the sustainers of this state. The rest of us were partakers of its life-giving force. We, the struggling casualties of a cultural collision, were too crippled to be sustainers. I know the time when I "awoke" and was able to commit consciously my own life to being a sustainer of this "communion". When I accepted this responsibility, that was the moment that I named what I joined. I had named this "community", and I used the term to incorporate everyone who lived together as a group in one geographical location, or sometimes to incorporate a larger collective of these smaller groups, depending on the context of my work.

In the official use of the word, our "communities" meant only geography and physical proximity of people confined in one area. "Community" had no connection in this sense with a spiritual or "mystical union"-experience. However, these individuals and I, each in our own way, understood the meaning of this word "community" to be based on some level of personal participation in some form of united purpose. Hamlets, as recently contrived physical groupings for more efficient provision of government services, did not and could not constitute "communities" to any one of us.

In this manner of thinking, I had to agree with the two men in part only. That is, that native people gathered together and living in one locale do not necessarily form a community because they do not necessarily share common interests or live together for a common purpose. The other part, however, is also true; they may in fact form a community in a spiritual or mystical sense.

In my own process of finding new words to explain my experience, I arrived at my present position, with, incidentally, no reason to assume that here is the definitive explanation. I had an experience of something which I called "community". I re-named it "communion" when I realized that the word "community" would not encompass every individual. I experienced "communion" as an experience in which all of us were participants, no matter where or how we lived. "Community", however, became a state of "group being". It named that group of persons who had consciously determined and accepted that their lives would be committed to a process of building "community". In other words, those who joined together to give form or expression to this experience of "communion" would be living in "community". "Community" would name that process of re-creating our own reality; as such, a community is not tangible or static but dynamic and ever-changing. I think I will continue to use the word "community" in the same way I had done previously. It holds more potential for life than "hamlet", "settlement", or "reserve". Also, it reflects the reality that everyone, whether or not they are conscious of it, participate in some way in "community". If the individual is consciously involved, he is living in community or building community and the community sustains him. It is not native communities which die, it is the individuals. If we as individuals have sustained community as the expression of our communion, then we ensure the sustenance of our children. Scott Peck's message was not dissimilar for his own society.

There were two other groups of writers who described non-native structures and world-views which allows some form of dialogue and the establisment, at least, of a language to describe and think about my experiences in the native world. The first group was Carl Jung and his student, Ira Progoff, both psychologists. The second group was Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, biologists/neurobiologists.

Meeting Jung through his ideas and concepts was my first opportunity to put my own teachings and experience into psychological terms. There were some parts of his analysis and descriptions of being human which struck me as reflecting or implying a hierarchy and levels or degrees of being human, especially those explanations he gave regarding the psyches of "primitives". I shall refer to this again. Nonetheless, he called forth, named, and ordered those parts of myself which I had experienced but had not named or ordered. I had simply been taught to live and respect the parts as part of my wholeness. Jung gave me words like archetypes, the collective unconscious, consciousness, unconscious contents, psyche, personality and synchronicity. I read his works with a passion. My experiences of dreams, visions, magic, Indian medicine, rituals and symbols, and many interactions with non-natives suddenly fit into a new structure. Very few concepts were outside of my own experience within the realm of my own being. I felt his struggle to give words to phenomena that other people of his society denied totally. I struggled then to follow his thinking through the depths of his experiences and reflections in psychology. With certainty I decided that this was one man whose work was worth the struggle to understand. I don't claim to understand all or even most of his thoughts, but I have interpreted some of them in ways that have helped me to begin to understand all persons. One process proved useful in understanding the native focus on the strength of the individual and the personal journey of each person through life, alone but as part of a collectivity. Jung describes this as "the way of individuation".

> individuation means becoming an 'in-dividual', and, in so far as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming into selfhood' or 'self-realization'(Jung, 1971:121-122).

I don't intend to comment further on much of Jung's work, except those aspects relating to the concept of "synchronicity" and a few references from the Commentary he wrote for a little book entitled The Secret of the Golden Flower, translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm. These works in particular mesh with what I have presented thus far. In the commentary, Jung recognizes that his own work led him to conclusions and concepts that paralleled the psychology of the Eastern mind.

He understood the connecting points between Western and Eastern "minds" to be located at the level of the individual human psyche. He points out that human anatomy essentially demonstrates a commonality that overrides any differences which arise from a division of mankind into races. In a similar manner, he says, culture and consciousness are transcended by "a common substratum" of the human psyche which he terms the "collective unconscious". The contents of the unconscious psyche can become part of consciousness, and reflect "latent" dispositions toward certain identical reactions. Thus, the existence of the collective unconscious is psychic evidence of commonality of "brain structures irrespective of all racial differences". To Jung, similarity of themes threading their way through cultural mythologies and symbols springs from the existence of the collective unconscious, and leads into "the possibility of human beings making themselves mutually understood". "The various lines of psychic development start from one common stock whose roots reach back into the strata of the past (1962:87).

Jung warns that the path to "self-hood" is "not without danger". He cautions Western peoples on this path not to expect cultural support from their culture or society. He compares the Western experience to that of a Chinese person who undertakes this journey to "self-realization". The Chinese person is perceived by his culture to be embarking upon "what is recognized as being the best of all the things he could do" (1962:95). The native people place the same value and respect upon this experience and choice.

> But the Westerner who wishes to start upon this way, if he is truly serious about it, has all authority against him - intellectual, moral, and religious....The steps to higher consciousness lead us out and away from all rear-guard cover and from all safety measures. (1962:95).

Personal integrity is the essential quality needed to carry and protect a person along this path.

For the purposes of my discussion of Synchronicity, I will refer firstly to Jung's work entitled Synchronicity: an Acausal Connecting Principle and then to the synthesizing of Jungian thought presented in the work of Ira Progoff. It is important to understand that the Synchronicity principle was defined by Jung as "a psychically conditioned relativity of space and time (1972:28).

Jung comments further, then, that from this,

> (space and time) relativization by psychic conditions is no longer a matter for astonishment but is brought within the bounds of possibility. This possibility presents itself when the psyche observes, not external bodies, but itself(1972:28).

I felt a deep inner excitement when I first met the term "Synchronicity" and started to read Jung. The connection I made immediately was based in this relativity of space and time in connection with physical events. I want to quote from Jung himself to express the "vision" that he saw would be the contribution to knowledge of his work on Synchronicity.

> Synchronicity is not a philosophical view but an empirical concept which postulates an intellectually necessary principle.
>
> If the latest conclusions of science are coming nearer to a unitary idea of being, characterized by space and time on the one hand and by causality and synchronicity on the other, then this demonstrates the "possibility of getting rid of the incommensurability between the observed and the observer. The result in that case would be a unity of being which would have to be expressed in terms of conceptual language - a 'neutral language' as W. Pauli once called it (1972:133).

The concept of synchronicity was developed in an attempt to explain rationally two sets of events which occur at the same moment, and are not causally related, though nonetheless obviously connected in some meaningful relationship. In Jung's terms

> Synchronistic events rest on the simultaneous occurrence of two different psychic states. One of them is the normal, probable state (i.e. the one that is causally explicable), and, the other, the critical experience, is the one that cannot be derived causally from the first (Jung, 1972:40).

Synchronistic events are a normal way for native people to access knowledge and experience which would otherwise be unavailable if we had to limit ourselves to a world of cause and effect lodged within a particular conception of time and space.

In discussion and application of synchronicity to my own reality, I want to turn to another writer, Ira Progoff. I think Progoff's contribution has been to make available and more accessible a wider base of understanding and use for the very significant work of C.J. Jung.

That is not to say that the works by Progoff himself do not stand alone with their powerful impact on the personal lives of probably thousands; I'd like to hope millions. I will not comment here but I would certainly recommend Progoff's The Dynamics of Hope to anyone who espouses, with more than words, the idea that "humanity needs healing" and that we start with the invidividual person.

With respect, however, to this immediate task of my own communication, Progoff synthesized for me the overwhelming amount of writings that Jung contributed to the understanding of the human psyche. Progoff, in his elaboration of Jungian thought, offers an excellent framework around which to structure a discussion of the psychological processes and events surrounding the actions and meanings of visions for our people. Hiw work enttiled Jung, Sychronicity, and Human Destiny.reflects the scope and meaning which Progoff attributed to the principle of synchronicity.

Synchronicity allowed me a framework by which to describe a native experience which had no causal or magical basis in my understanding of it - that is, the expereince of visions. The experience and importance of visions to us is generally known, I think. Whether this particular experience of our reality is understood, or dismissed as pseudo-science, "witchcraft", "voodoo", or "magic", I am not sure.

I am certain, however, that the possibility of any non-native/native dialogue must depend somewhat on the individual consciousness of our mutual and probably universal psychic reality. Understanding that the contents of our consciousness may differ from one individual group to another will certainly affect what happens when we meet from our different social realities in a shared context., one of which is education.

From the native perspective, visions have a very significant impact on who we are and on the process of becoming both as individuals and as a people. As such, visions are continually unfolding in meaning from moment to moment. Visions are understood to be an expression of the macrocosm which is being or will be reflected either in our inner life or psyche or in the world of outer events and situations. It is our responsibility as individual human beings, that at times, when we are granted a vision we may be asked to re-enact on this natural level the vision and provide its interpretation where necessary. We would do this for the benefit, the future growth, and the direction of the people as a whole.

The experience of visions, or the living-out is not limited to the most commonly cited "vision-quest" or "vision-seeking". These have simply been more widely presented because they are tangibly obvious in certain ways to an observer. Nonetheless, I will address my comments on visions particularly to this expression of vision-seeking.

An explanation of the process, utilizing Jung's principle of synchronicity should demonstrate that while this principle has apparently not had any strong impact on the Western mainstream psychology, it can be very useful to us as a way of understanding the complexity of the psychological process of receiving visions.

A native individual embarking on a vision-quest enters the experience with a frame of mind which is intense and expectant. He is conducting an activity which will have varying degrees of significance for himself as an individual, and for his family group as a whole. As such, there is a certain tension underlying his actions. In the processes which are followed for purification and preparation to receive his vision, he undergoes privation . His physical being demands attention, but he must maintain strict adherence to the rituals. To suffer physically is part of the process, and from the bodily deprivations, the emotional and mental controls begin to lessen. Maintaining himself in a state of prayer and meditation has become the sole reality for the seeker. He has reached a level where there is no conscious differentiation for him between the physical and the psychical within himself. This parallels the description of the psychoid level. Here it is "the primal form of the contents of the human psyche when they have not yet become specifically psychological, or when they have dropped down from the psychological level to touch the undifferentiated state of nature"(Progoff, 1973: 157).

Once here, the archetypal factor which is activated is that part of the macrocosm which is particularly a part of himself as an individual in that particular moment of time. The two factors which Jung found to be related to any synchronistic event taking place are both present. There is a "chain of interior causation" including the lowering of the mental level, and the activation of the archetype. The second factor is the corresponding outer event or condition which occurs.

The outer event in the situation of the "vision seeking" is the vision which is shown to the seeker. The archetype itself is presented to the seeker in a recognizable culturally-clothed form. There are occasions when along with the vision which is perceived or experienced by the seeker, there is also presented an animal or bird, for example. This animal or bird would also have been the key element within the vision. This then becomes the completed synchronistic event. To the seeker, the vision he received is a part of the larger world of spirit. If he sees some entity of the natural world also presented to him, he feels a great strength given to himself through his vision, and verification of the message and its meaning is inherent in the appearance of the natural being.

Ira Progoff, discusses the "primitive" belief in the divine or spiritual potency which is ascribed to certain animals, or objects. This belief is "derived from a larger symbol drawn from the myths of the culture, a symbol of an historical and archetypical nature that is projected upon the animal" (p. 126). While this particular passage is incomplete and inaccurate in its application to our people, there are elements here which suggest a parallel to certain practises of our people. This parallel, however, does not exist except at a superficial, visible, level. There are animals, for example, who play an important part in developing meaning for the life of a family group. These animals could be viewed as carrying symbolic meaning of an historical or archetypal nature.

These meaning are not "projected" onto the animal. They are handed down orally to the members of the family group which is affected by that particular archetype and the significant event which is historical but relevant today. The event would normally be associated with an ancestor of the group and his experience with that animal and/or archetype.

Progoff continues by explaining that this animal or object, then, because of its ascribed powers, becomes a part of the "larger scheme of meaning whose basis lies in the unconscious of the primitive"(p. 126).[3] My previous comments relate to this, and I would add that any individual form within the group can access these underlying meanings which, in fact, give meaning to the life of the group as a collective whole.

Referring back to the "vision-seeker" situation, the form of the archetype which is shown to the seeker takes on a significant meaning in the life of the individual.

He may, for example, be shown an animal which promises to help and guide him, and even describes the individual's role in the group. From this time on, the animal himself, or a symbolic form of the animal, can be utilized to activate the archetype and to create the necessary emotional and psychic state to bring about a synchronistic event. Like any example of synchronicity, there arises then a "new pattern or orderedness of events across time" (p. 126). The new pattern or orderedness which happens in one moment across time will lead, in the extension of the vision-seeking situation, to the seeker embarking on a new level of awareness and involvement in his physical world. He has a guide to assist him in any crucial situation - a guide who can assist him to transcend the natural level of causal relationships and enter into a state where he can utilize the principle of synchronicity as a part of his conscious way of dealing with his world. In those moments of synchronicity, he will become aware of the directions he must follow in order to be living his life in a manner which maintains harmony and balance within himself, his society, and all other life. He is enabled to live a life consistent and in rhythm with the movement of his people and the earth.

Progoff seems to suggest that "primitives" or people who "accept magic causality"(pps. 86, 124, 127) do not deal with the question of the link between the psyche and the outer event of synchronicity. These people "explain the changes that take place across the patterns of time" as being determined by "a divine or demonic power". Later on, in the same text. Progoff discusses the factor of integrative orderedness, as being "of primary importance in synchronistic phenomena". He states clearly that "the essence of synchronicity is to be found in the fact that synchronicity carries a principle of orderedness that occurs in the universe regardless of causal connections and beyond space and time ... implicit in its definition as involving meaningful coincidences is the presence of an organ of meaning that is an inherent part of each synchronistic event" (p. 161).

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[3] Quoting from this section of the book should not be understood as an acceptance of the full interpretatation. Powers are not "ascribed"; nonetheless,the quotation itself is true.

Jung's work pointed out that this *organ of meaning* is not necessarily the conscious mind or intellect. Progoff shows how it is the archetypal element which becomes the effective factor in a synchronistic situation. This is because the archetype serves as a constellative factor, and tends to "recrystallize and re-constitute the situation"... "and it becomes the core of the new quality of orderedness that permeates and characterizes the new situation as it exists across time"(p. 161).

A description of what happens during the attainment of a vision could easily be expressed in Progoff's words, "When the reconstellative element becomes active, events and awarenesses come together in a way that reaches across time and space and that goes beyond causality. Synchronicity is thus brought into play by means of a specific ordering factor that moves across and beyond causality. This is the transcausal factor that makes synchronicity events possible"(p. 163). As the transcausal factor moves across and beyond causality, "it reconstellates the components of a given moment of time and thus brings forth new and meaningful events."

The transcausal factor, of which the effective agent or archetype is the core, is that specific ordering factor which is reflected in all synchronistic events. The re-constellative or organizational effect of the archetypes enables the interior orderedness of the macrocosm to become evident. To the vision-seeker, the synchronistic event is the expression of the meaning he seeks. He has lived in the world where his family members accepted the principle of synchronicity as well as the causality principle. The principle of synchronicity operated as a means of contact with the orderedness within the macrocosm. In order to live in harmony with the macrocosm, it was necessary and logical that the means existed whereby the individual would be able to experience this orderedness and this harmony within his own life. To actually live with the reality of experiencing the psychoid depths, and to "see" an archetype activated, and use the living symbol of the archetype to assist his individual life within a framework which was in harmony with the macrocosm, seems to have been achievable to the seeker. Essentially, it is another way of "knowing".

Does it really matter whether the individual used psychological terms to explain what happens or whether he just did it?

In magic causality, emotionality is not objective. The will belongs to the individual who deliberately uses his emotions to alter psychic states and events. Progoff places "primitive" use of symbols and objects in this category where the object takes on the role of "will", and a belief on the part of the "primitive" in the power of the "will" of the object stimulates the activation of an archetypal effect and its ensuing new patterns and orderedness of events across time (pp. 125-126). I would say the more accurate view is that for our people, while emotionality can replicate and produce what appears to be similar events and situations, these types of events are never viewed as reliable and genuine. In fact, for us, emotionality in the exercise of vision-seeking does not have a place. It is viewed as a weakness and would therefore be detrimental rather than helpful to the individual. The fact that emotionality is self-induced means you would only be seeing reflections of your self and your own weakness. There would be no real connection made with the higher level, or the macrocosm. Another statement which needs brief comment is that "primitive" view that postulates "a divine or demonic power to explain changes that take place across the patterns of time"(p. 127). Here, I would like to refer to Teilhard de Chardin and his "explanation" in The Phenomenon of Man. If I were to stretch his concept of the noosphere to his apex of man's evolution as the Body of Christ, then, here, again would be interpreted a divine power which "causes" all synchronistic events. I doubt that this interpretation of Tielhard de Chardin's structure of the world would be acceptable to his readers.

As for our people, we know that the natural world is a reflection of the higher world, and that we are here to express the unity and harmony of that level. We therefore must be able to tap into or connect with and utilize the principles which govern the structure of, and maintain the orderedness of both levels. These principles may be causal, acausal or transcausal. The connectedness between both realities is necessary and if we are to be expressing the reality of the macrocosm, then we can find the meaning of our lives by understanding the higher level. To gain this understanding must then require some medium whereby we can access some knowledge of the principles and the interior orderedness of the macrocosm as it is expressed at this level.

If the translation of the native experience of this "interior orderedness" is termed "divine power", that in no way reduces the experience of vision- seeking to "magic causality". The "interior orderedness" is still operative as a principle.

While I have been using the specific experience of the vision-quest as undertaken by an individual, there are, of course, other situations of visions which could also be described in the Jungian-Progoffian terms. The work of these two men offers a description of the psychological experience of visions which closely parallels our understanding of what happens to the individual who receives a vision. The principle of synchronicity and its connecting parts of archetypal effects as transcausal factors, and the basis of the relatedness between the macrocosm and the microcosm are the necessary elements to an understanding of the meaning of visions to native people.

I will complete this reflection on synchronicity and native "visions" by referring you to the following quote from Progoff, asking you to keep in mind Jung's structuring of the psyche into four strata - Ego consciousness, Personal Unconscious, Collective Unconscious, and Psychoid:

> The condition in which the psyche is internally balanced by an integration of consciousness and the unconscious in mutually supporting roles is the most creative state to which the psyche can be brought. As the integration encompasses the psyche in its largest aspect, drawing the personal factors of the psyche into macrocosmic connections, this unity involves the Self as a whole in its double aspect s the primary ground of psychic realities and also as the reflector of the cosmos in man (1973:91).

While Ira Progoff's work on the Jungian principle of synchronicity offered a means of describing a vision-experience, there are other writers (for example, Varela and Maturana) whose work also reflects a way of describing the world which is not merely causal. These writers have faced the continued reluctance of the Western World to incorporate their ideas into a description of the physical world. It is to these people and their research that we must look if we ever hope to develop systems and institutions which provide children with a possibility of achieving their potential as human beings. I am addressing an important element for native education but if we were ever to build an educational system which reflected Jung's principles of synchronicity, or Varela's "epistemology of participation", then we must begin to build a world where man accepts his place and his responsibility in the world which he has co-created and in which he is interconnected.

Varela and Maturana (1987) address this analysis of natural systems with a base of information and research in the field of biology and neurobiology. I admired these men for the way they linked scientific knowledge and information to a purpose - to increase human understanding of natural life and its organizational systems. This work was meaningful and useful to me only because man and his social systems were treated as part of this natural systems theory, but as vitally connected with all other life forms and their systems.

Varela in his 1979 work, begins by explaining the need to reinterpret information in relation to a system. It must be "reinterpreted as co-dependent and constructive, in contradistinction to representational and instructive" (p.xv. "We move from questions about 'semantic' correspondence to questions about 'structural' patterns" (p. xv). When we, as observers, study a natural system, we have simultaneous access to the system's operation and to its process of interaction. Whereupon, we easily confuse what we observe as a system's "behavioral regularities" as a correspondence between the system and its external environment. We forget that we are outside of the system's operation, and that it is this vantage point that leads us into the error of assuming that our "semantic correspondence" is the system's reality.

From the system's reality, these regularities are not operational; they are "a consistency with its own on-going maintenance of identity" (p. xix). Thus, when we switch from an information input-transferal perspective to a perspective of systems' autonomy, we see that information is relative to the maintenance of a system's identity, and can only be described in reference to it, for there is no designer" (p. xx). Information is internal to the system and specified thorough its operation. With respect to natural systems, therefore, and in order to better understand ourselves as part of the natural world, we must move beyond the "semantic correspondence" view of biological reality as we have imposed it. This is a dramatic shift for us because it can move us into an awareness of our own operations within domains of description. Descriptions of reality are not reality itself. "The observer sets criteria for distinctions in different domains, and is capable of alternative descriptions or different views of a system"(p. 59).

Varela admits that this point of view is only the beginning of the research program, however,

> unless we take into account that there is an autonomous side to many natural and social systems, we run into troubles, not only in the specifics of research and formalizations, but in the wider scale of our dealings with sentient beings, with life, with the environment, and in human communication. In this respect, the problems of biology are a microcosm of the global philosophical questions with which we grapple today (p xv).

Rather than go into details of biological structure and analyses as put forward by Varela, I want only to use his underlying view about autonomy of living systems and their relations with the world. He did not apply his discussion to human communities or human individuals, but he did, in many parts of his book, allude to the fact that dramatic shifts in thinking would be required if one were to consider cultural entities as "unities" or "living systems" within the framework of his discussion.

Consider the social and ethical input of recognizing epistemologies of other cultures in the work of "science". As native people, we learn the significance and responsibility of our own individuality. But, we also learn the connectedness and relationship of our individuality to the family group, to the society, to humanity, and to all other living systems. We learn that the group does not exist as a unit without the strength of each individual. As individuals, we see ourselves reproducing and experience ourselves in what we reproduce. We become the product of ourselves, and yet the product becomes its unity within the whole. The individual is never subordinate to the family group or to the species. He is essential to the continuance of the whole.

Varela says:

> any observation, even one that permits us to recognize the operational validity of a scientific statement, implies an epistemology: a body of explicit or implicit conceptual notions that determines the perspective of the observations and, hence, what can and what cannot be observed, what can and what cannot be validated by its operative effectiveness, and what can and what cannot be explained by a given body of theoretical knowledge (p. 44).

Varela addresses the consequences of recognizing human social systems as biological systems:

> Darwin's notion of evolution had social significance because it seemed to offer an explanation of the social phenomenology in a competitive society, as well as a scientific justification for the subordination of the destiny of the individual to the transcendental values supposedly embodied in notions such as mankind, the state, and society (p. 46).

It is very significant that a "Western" scientist will recognize, and state that recognition of, the ethical and political implications of his answers. Varela observes that these implications are "obvious" in the case of biological systems because:

> whatever we may say biologically will apply in the domain of human interactions directly, either by use or abuse, as we saw with evolutionary notions. In fact, no position or view that has any relevances in the domain of human relations can be deemed free from ethical and political implications, nor can a scientist consider himself alien to these implications (p. 53).

Varela makes it clear that these ideas and their consequences are applicable not only to biological natural systems, but also to human and social systems (p. 59).

Varela discusses two forms of explanation in science, the operational explanation and the symbolic explanation. He points out that the Western preference for operational (or causal) explanations is being altered due to the latest finding in physics, the rise of biological science, cybernetics and systems theory, and the reawakening in Europe of the need for a type of explanation based on understanding, communication, and purpose in human affairs at its core. Varela reminds us that both forms of explanation refer to modes of description relative to some perspective of the observer, or rather, we should say, of the inquiring community" (p. 72). He makes a native response to this situation of opposing views. By "putting these two means of explanations, historically antagonistic, into a dualistic perspective, we gain power of explanation"(p.72) with significant modification to each mode. The symbolic explanation becomes embedded in a "causal substrate", and the causal explanation "must make way for non-causal explanations as equally valid". One example of this dualistic orientation would be to explain evolution and development by means of an understanding of the origin of life and by means of the use of genetic material(p. 79).

Throughout his book, Varela holds that "the notions of cooperative interaction, self-organization, and autonomy - in brief, holistic notions - are basic to the study of natural systems" (p. 84). In fact, "we simply see autonomy and control, causal and symbolic explanations, reductionism, and holism as complementary or 'cognitively adjoint' for the understanding of those systems in which we are interested" (p. 104). This is a true statement for me as well as for Varela in his search for acceptable descriptions and explanations of natural systems.

Our elders speak of complementarity between autonomy and control, and tell us to consider all parts of the whole before taking action. When we live under this system of thought, and must deal with a system which predominantly exhibits operational explanations and causal thinking, control attitudes and views towards information, reductionism and focus on parts as separate from any whole; and a view that the observed can exist completely independently of what he observes, and that objectivity in observation of people is possible, then, for me, it is the work of people such as Varela which can serve as the link between our two systems.

Varela comments on communication as "behavior in a linguistic domain" (p. 267) leads me down the path I started with Freire.

> Conversation has been a basic image used throughout this presentation as a paradigm for interactions among autonomous systems....its role as exemplary case of autonomous interaction comes from the fact that a conversation is *direct* experience, the human experience par excellence - we live and breathe in dialogue and language....Whatever is informative in a conversation is intrinsically co-dependent and interpretational. Whatever is said in order to fix and objectify the nature of a conversation's content is said from a perspective, from a tradition, and is always open to question, to revision, to disagreement (p. 268-269).

Varela describes dialogue as we need to live it.

When we look at conversation or dialogue as "the performance and acceptance of single speakers",

> we take language as conveying information and instructions; in the other case we leave aside the individual participant, and see the process of conversation and understanding as a distributed, coherent event shared among participants, where meaning and understanding is relative to the recursive process of interpretation within the conversational unit (p. 269).

Before I conclude this sharing of Varela, I am including the following sections to describe interconnectivity as mind. His ideas on "Units of Mind"(p. 220) are basically the same as those of Gregory Bateson in his book Mind and Nature. He begins by showing how a conversation is an autonomous entity, "for we are immersed in the ongoing autonomy of our tradition, the ongoing autonomy of a next higher level of interdependence as participants" (p. 270). From here, he discusses the notion of "subject". We must realize that we are parts of the cognitive process belonging to an autonomous unity, operating at the next higher level:

> it is obvious that there is a next higher level in the coherence of a unit to which we have no direct access, but to which we contribute and in which we exist. To this next higher level belong the characteristics of mind we attribute to ourselves individually; in fact, what we experience as our mind cannot truly be separated from this network to which we connect and through which we interdepend (p. 270-271).

In my introduction, I referred to a book by Varela and Maturana, The Tree of Knowledge. Varela's work in these pages brings us back conceptually to where we began. The Tree of Knowledge has a stated purpose:

> to understand the regularity of the world we are experiencing at every moment, but without any point of reference independent of ourselves that would give certainty to our descriptions and cognitive assertions. (1987:241).

Referring back to the writers whose work I have cited, I wonder which of them might pass the test of criteria by which a scientist is determined and named. Varela and Maturana are biologists who have used biological research and information to reach a conclusion which places "love as the biological basis of social life" (p. 247). Love, "the acceptance of the other person beside us in our daily living"(p.246). How does this happen? In Varela and Maturana's words,

> biology also shows us that we can expand our cognitive domain. This arises through a novel experience brought forth through reasoning, through the encounter with a stranger, or more directly, through the expression of a biological interpersonal congruence that lets us 'see' the other person and open up for him room for existence beside us. This act is called 'love'. ... This is the biological basis of social phenomenon: without love, without acceptance of others living beside us, there is no social process, and therefore no humanness (p. 246).

Varela and Maturana have shown us that love as a state of interconnectedness is a biological fact necessary for the survival of natural life.

Does love require consciousness? It seems not if we follow this convincing presentation of these two scientists. However, it seems that the human path of development has brought us to this point in our "ontogeny" where the life of all natural systems, including our own, requires consciousness. Love may not need consciousness, but life seems to, at least from where we sit today.

On the questions of whether love needs life or whether love is life, I wonder if the future history of humanity will have a reference point to care or know. By all models of science today, it will never know.

It makes sense at this point in human history that we all require "consciousness". It is only conscious decisions which can avert our own annihilation. Now, we must all choose to save ourselves since we are all involved in the use of those life-destroying discoveries which threaten us. How we come to that choice will be different but hopefully what we choose will be the same.

Consciousness appears to be necessary for those people who have lost, or had lost, that internal state of their own interconnectedness. They shifted the human and natural experience of "becoming" to one of "knowing" at what they call a conscious level. Their primary and necessarily first task then becomes acquiring what Varela and Maturana have described as "the knowledge of knowledge" (p. 244-45). They need to begin with "how they know what they know".

It also makes sense that the society which required a process of "conscious" individuation for its members is the one which developed the theory and practise. "Knowledge of Knowledge" is linked with that process. We all "know that we know", but how we acquire this knowledge as individuals of different traditions and societal histories is very likely through very different processes. Jung's description of "consciousness" from the tradition of the non-native society makes perfect sense within that particular context. Studying that helps me to "see" the members of that society and that tradition more clearly. I am not sure if his analysis can be transposed to the ancient peoples and into, for example, the traditions of the Indian reality in exactly the manner which he lays out. Nevertheless, it has served to open doors to "knowing" more in a different way for me. I was conscious of my own individuation process before I read Jung, but I am not sure where or how, nor have I otherwise analyzed how I came into that conscious state other than through what was my "natural" cultural way of becoming.

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I have shared my thoughts on the experience of native education. I hope I have made it clear that while this does not describe our system of education, nor does it connect or base itself in our reality, it is most definitely our experience. We are the object of a system which reflects another society, a society whose members must be freed to "see" us. They must free themselves and we must free ourselves. It is an individual journey, however, for each of us, and it is certainly possible that we will find ourselves sharing the same world in a conscious way.

To the non-native person, I can only say work with us and be with us - "be" with your whole being - not only with your dress and your body and your words. This means you must be prepared to suffer: for one thing, finding oneself can be a painful journey, and for another, the native reality of "schooling" has been one of suffering. If it helps to know this, you will never find yourself alone when you suffer "with" us.

To the native person, I must say education of our children is on-going. We must not make the mistake, however, of assuming that only the school or the non-native society is teaching our children. We need to see and understand exactly what lesson our children are learning, and begin to transform these from life-destroying ones to life-sustaining ones. "Who is sustaining the spirit of our child today?" is a question we need to ask every morning. We have all the ways within our own reality to sustain our own beings. When we do this, we will be able to re-create our own daily experience as people in a spirit of "community".

In schooling, the most important person to the child is the teacher. The rest are the individuals who sit in relation to the teacher. The following quotation is one I always keep in my mind when I think about which individual I want to entrust with the care of my child: "An ancient adept has said, 'if the wrong person uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way!" (Wilhelm, 1962:83).

The method is the path or direction taken by the person. It may be a good or right path. However, the true expression of a person's character is the *way* he acts. If his actions, the method that is, are not an expression of his character, then the method becomes "nothing more than an affectation", "artificial", "rootless", "sapless". The method must be rooted in the person if it is to generate meanings and life. Curriculum and methods which support native values and systems of knowledge can and should be developed; but they will not be useful or meaningful unless they are in the hands of the right person. The right person can help to make meaning for a child out of a wrong curriculum, and still guide students the right way.

The "right" persons are not found in any particular cultural group or society. They are found individually within all culture, but their beings have transcended cultural boundaries. Their actions, express the understanding that it is individuals who co-create their different societies and, at the same time, co-create the global community. They will naturally support any child to live his own culture, and to respect all others.

In some ways it has been difficult sharing a description of my life and reflections with you. I found it difficult, for instance, to relive some times of anguish and to put them aside There were many, many times when my thoughts disappeared as I felt myself shifting and being shifted with all the grains of sand in our reality. Yet, if you are interested in what I think or have experienced in native education, you must know me to know that. Maybe it is more likely that I am driven to telling you, for many unexpressed reasons. Both of us must take the risk of seeing our real selves in the mirror of someone else's eyes. It may be a moment of pain, or a moment of joy, but it will certainly be a moment of freedom.

In the epilogue of prose and poetry I submit expressions of my connections on my own journey. These are presented as another way of sharing my experience in native education - native education as my own learning and my own process of education. I would like to see more joy in the "poetry" of all my children as native education evolves.

Epilogue

Connections

A. At an education conference, I listened to a soft-spoken Indian artist (painter) describe his life's journey through the school system of failure, through years of alcoholism and personal despair, finally, with his grandfather's help, to "finding himself" as an Indian in a larger world. What interested me was the positive response he was getting from his audience. Persons who, in the school system they represented, were actively involved in making decisions consciously or unconsciously, which prohibited programs based on native values and practices were nodding and smiling in agreement and encouragement. The basic message they were sending out by their positive responses to this man was "If I make the decision, then life will work well for me. If the decisions must come from somewhere else, then , I will not support it. I must be inspired, touched inside, in order for me to be a creative part of anything."

The situation led me to write in my journal in an address to these people:

> "Its the 'sharing or 'not sharing' which shapes the world. I am not willing to share sometimes with the same gentle voice. You mistake gentleness for lack of strength. You therefore can listen and smile. The same message from an AIM activist would cause you to tighten your armored chestplate. Why? Becausethe spirit of the activist suggests freedom; by his refusal to "look" and "appear" conquered he is grating and objectionable to you? You want him "defeated" and accepting your ways but, for him and his ways you will show the sword? If you were truly listening, you would hear and realize that both men give the same message. But you are refusing to grant Indian people the right to individual expression- One form only is acceptable because it conforms with your "picture" of the "conquered'. That neither individual is conquered is not of any consequence to you. Your ego builds your world and your response but there are not egos allowed in a conquered race - its a luxury item in the human being which cannot be allowed to the Beaten.

Gentle voice
Reaching out from years of hurt
To explain to you,
To help you to understand

"A gift", he said -
"That is our way to show appreciation."

And you -
Where is your gift to him?
Or rather -
What is your gift?

I think perhaps
I have made a mistake
An assumption, it would be called.
I assumed that you appreciated
The gift of the spirit's voice.

Of course you would not
You could not.
You think you already possess him -
That he is a part of the Canada
You conquered.

Is it a mean joke?
Or did I simply miss the "booze trip"
Which might have given me

The same gentle voice

To convey the same agonizing cry?

He is not conquered.
Nor am I -
Nor will I ever have that gentle voice.

B. A desire and a willingness to communicate on the part of one does not necessarily lead to communication if the other is not willing or is unable to hear. For a person who lives the concept of mankind in the process of Becoming one Whole, there can be a tremendous feeling of alienation, separation, and "still motion" in the face of what he experiences as a society which is unable to love, or to be in a state of communion or participation.

1. There has been a tree
Bending towards the ground.
A tree that cannot
Claim to be a willow

Yet I see the years
Have gone by
And now its head
Caresses the ground
On which its feet are resting.

It must be true
That love of life
Will grant us life.

2. The air has been moving
In circles of grey and smoky silver-
Creeping over my freezing limbs.

The ominous tones sound blue,
And purple flashes
Through my veins.

And at the centre of the
        swirling colors and sombre tones
Flames burn their way
Through flesh that's refused to stop
Pulsing, breathing, living.

The ice crystals never stop
        forming
And the flames never stop
        burning.

How can one frozen body
        and one burning spirit
Go on in a world
Which demands that they stay together?

3. The stars fill a fiery sky,
The moon floats in red,
 Even the icy snows of winter burn.

Where once I had a mind
 Flames leap crazily here and there
The storm and heat of my heart
Must be freed.

But I cannot speak
My tongue is sealed by a
        greater flame within that never fades.

I teeter crazily on the brink of madness -
Madness
Where Life says
Work - at what?
Believe - in what?

4. The threads of who I am
Are tattered and whining
In the endless, howling
Turmoil of the raging winds
Within.

C. The union with nature is easier to achieve, it being a way of life from childhood. It is used for replenishing and sustaining my life's energy.

1. A wolf stands
Blazing in the red sunset.

His soul is aflame
With the fires of freedom.

He is Beauty,
And Freedom,
And Power.

No man nor beast
Can touch his soul -
It is never with him.

He spends his days
Following the flame and the redness of the night.
His soul knows its wanderings -
He is content to follow.

He is red -
The red of a life aflame.

A life that burns death
In the cauldron of our universe

2. The wind was soft
In the leaves above my head.
I spoke to him.
He swept softly away in the night.

I said:
"Come back and speak to me.
I need your voice and your presence."
He returned like distant thunder
And jet sounds on a summer day.
I thought he'd come and speak.
But he faded away -
And then silence.

I waited.
A little breeze stole softly to my soul and said,
"Not yet. He will return
When you are ready to understand
For now, I am here."

3. The sun came reaching for the day
With pink fingers of yearning and warmth,
He reached out to envelop the cool world
And suffuse her blue-grey body
With lights of invisible colour.

I was in the world of that moment
And his gentle fingers
Soothed my restless soul.

4. A flower speaks . . .

Look deeply,
Then, drink as deeply
Of the honey that flows
From the earth
And settles in my breast -
Then reflects upon my beautiful face.

5. Little flower
You draw the drops
Of sunlight to your face.

You reflect
The light of millions
Of dewdrops
On the lake.

You enrich my life
And draw these
Forces of light together;
And bring me joy.

6. I saw a star
Fade into the heavens
It spoke to my spirit,
And showed me your eyes.
It brought the soaring and the floating eagle
To one image within my mind.

7. You are a wolf.
In your waking dreams
You can become a wolf.

You can speak to me
If you will.

For I am a wolf, too.

8. Help me-
Wind
I need your voice and touch
I need your love words
In my soul

D. The spiritual union with other persons can only be attained when both parties are capable and willing of surrendering their individual beings in order to create a third. This surrendering can be conscious or unconscious.

1. Bright colored beads
Weave a design
That dances through the mind

A dream
Becomes a reality -
A design to touch
To feel.

But the aged woman
Sits in the darkness
Created by this world, this society.

She pulls the light
from her soul -
Some ancient part of my being
Responds to her light
And in your darkness
We meet.
Illuminating each others existence.

2. Old man -
You have the religions of the earth
Within your soul.
From the ancient far-east
To the western Christ.

Each one has warred with the other,
Each one claiming God
And men's souls for Eternity.

Yet, they have found
A place of peace and love
Within you,

And, somehow, you have
given them
Life and Meaning.

3. Waves of purple and amber
Moving towards me
In circles,
Growing larger, and deeper,
And more intense.
Filling me.

You touch me
And I am lost in that warmth and fire
Which is you, your dance.

I float away in fragments of sparkling lights -
Millions of exploding, dancing stars.

My body has become a centre
of energy points
Discharging, re-creating, and returning
Themselves to themselves

For a while we became that eternal dance,
With the millions of tiny stars of our beings
Joined in, explosions, re-creation, and re-direction.
A vibrating power
Which became us, and the thousand worlds
We created somewhere.

E. Let me refer to Eldrige Cleaver's Soul on Ice. Here we are given a revolutionary artist's experiences of living through the throes of the Black movement in the 60's. To read in his tortuous analysis of himself as a Black man in North American society and to share in his suffering of psychological castration was a spiritual experience for me. Spiritual in the sense that it enabled me to transcend the difference between man and woman, and to "see" and experience for myself the despair of being a man who is a member of a people of civilized "slavery". This was the moment when I realized the terrifying effects of oppression on the sexual aspect of our own beings as native woman and native man. Being a woman, I have loved men who suffered the despair of Cleaver - men who fought against psychological castration. I wrote the following words in 1977 when I re-read Eldridge Cleaver after four years.

> "I have six brothers. It was the pain and torture of my youngest brother which made me scream endlessly, in silence. A woman, after all, cannot scream aloud. She must only watch and wait, and love. She must watch, seeing the pain which could be drawn in harsh black lines, colored, toned, hewed - however one chose to face it. But it must be faced.
>
> Before I heard the lines of Cleaver, I saw them. Before I saw them, I felt them. They were not a thing of Beauty, they were wordless and full of terror.
>
> The man who first read these words aloud to me was not Black but his pain and his love was the same passionate cry.
> To face this expression of uncovered agony was overwhelming to me, but it did indeed mark the first step of the Return of Dead.
> It also marked the beginning of "I am", "you are", and therefore "we can be".

F. Then, there are the times of anger when I must watch and feel the suffering of my people and try to feel a hatred which cannot be. To feel that hatred in my being would perhaps, I reason in my mind, bring a sense of release. But I cannot feel the being of the tormentor himself as separate from me. Nonetheless, his actions I despise, and the anger is real.

1. Can I speak
And say because I'm a half-breed
I know what half-breeds feel?

Can I speak
And say because I'm and Indian

Do you, whiteman
Say, because you're white,
That you know what whitemen feel?

You come to me
With silver words
And say, "Speak of Indians, Indian!"
Or, "Speak of Metis, half-breed!"

Yet, you are careful to say
That not all whitemen are like you.
Not all whitemen care what Indians feel.
Or *if* they feel.

"Do they feel, Indian?
Do they feel, halfbreed?"
Speak, for you are all alike
- And I care.

2. "Go brother, go"
We call

And yet we stand aside
And watch him pass

If we ran, too,
We'd feel the pain,
And have to watch his feet in front of us -

Staining the grass
And reddening the ground
We all must walk upon.

3. Dear Fools,
Who also walk
The face of this planet,
And think from the abyss
Of their dismal grey tombs
That they will never all,
Nor will they ever See

But they *will* See,
And that day may be a blackness
They are unprepared to meet
Or enter into.
And what will they do?

And us -
What then do we do,
Who think we have seen the abyss
    of Ourselves within?

F. Finally, there is the expression of the hope and the vision that guides me.

Laying on of hands - charismatic -
The healing energy flow;
Hand me that cigarette - would you
    like a stick of gum?
And I rise and fall according to your touch.

One hundred pages you said,
One hundred years they've said;
One hundred times again and again
In multiples of hundreds, the pains
Have been lived and transcended,
Transformed and lived again.

We live our Mother Earth, they said
We become her and she has
    used and sustained us
That she might live.

We have lived her strivings and her pain,
We have been her thermometer,
And willingly or unwillingly, we were
        carried along in that flow
That marks her Presence, her existence, her Being.

By her, we were.

Now that she shakes and trembles,
We look in vain for those spots
Which brought us peace, and renewed
        that strength of flow
So that we could go on.

The glowing spots have dimmed
        and their number has lessened.
We must look for new ones.

What is the step beyond?
Can we renew the glow?
Do we have power beyond our Mother Earth?

We must begin to create, to recreate,
To return to the Earth the power
        that we have taken from her.

She has brought us to this point,
        and now she has need of us.
If we fail, if we are unable to
        draw the energy from the Great Spirit,
If we have neglected to learn and to care,
We will perish with the Mother.

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*ERIC documentation based on an unpublished research tool titled Canada Natives and Education: the ERIC Database 1983 to 1991 prepared in 1992 by Professor Marilyn Assheton-Smith for a graduate course on research in Native education, Educational Foundations 574.

** Corrections made to the ERIC abstract information, as in Assheton-Smith source.

Appendix A

A Discussion of Terminology

The word "Native" avoids "Indians", "Metis", "aboriginal people", "Inuit", "Bill C-31's", "status", "non-status", "indigenous peoples", "First Nations peoples". It avoids confusion by "lumping us all together the way we are usually perceived" by people outside of these labels. For the purposes of education and social conditions, natives people of all categories face similar issues. This is not true when applied to any areas of legal categorizations or constitutional matters. These areas do impact on education and social conditions, but not in a manner which changes the scope of my discussion.

Non-native means those persons who are not members of a native society and who together constitute a society; in this case the society whose members are most represented in the institution of schooling and other social or government agencies in our native communities.

My use of "he" to denote "he" or "she" is consistent with the English language and its reflection of the English-speaking culture which I have referred to as non-native society. I have a problem with the awkwardness of juggling words like "he/she". I also don't wish to pretend that the society which subordinates its women to its men is something it is not. It is a society whose members seems to have forgotten that they each had a mother, the source of their beings. Its language reflects that - why pretend that it does not? I will only add that because I heard men and women reflected equally as persons in the Cree language and I saw them living in partnerships of equality and complementarity, I did not learn to "see" men and women in an unequal pairing even when I used the English language. I still don't.

To recognize the concerns of my English-speaking sisters in this matter of my words, I would like to dedicate the poetry included in this work as an expression of myself as a woman and the only gift I can offer in this context.

Appendix B

Categorization of ERIC Abstracts, Canada and Native, Since 1985

Table 1: Categories and Number of Abstracts in Each Category

1.	General	37
2.	Teaching Resource Materials	36
3.	Post-Secondary Education	26
4.	Government Reports/Documents	23
5.	Native Language	18
6.	Bibliographies, Directories	18
7.	Classroom Learning and Culture	16
8.	Evaluation	15
9.	History	13
10.	Special Education	11
11.	Local Control/Schools	10
12.	Governance	9
13.	Literature	9
14.	Community and Development	8
15.	Counselling	8
16.	University Students	7
17.	Achievement	7
18.	Journals, Literary Selection	6
19.	Learning Styles	5
20.	Technology	5
21	Alternate Programs	5
22	Music/Musicology	5
23	Health	4
24	English as a Second Language (ESL)	3

Table 2(a): Categories and Author(s) of Abstracts in Each Category

General	Tchg/Rsrc Mtrls	Post-Secondary	GovRpts/Docs
Ledoux,Pendakur '90	Dyck '89	Smith, Pace '88	Falaredeau-Ramsey '89
Close '88	Alberta Ed '89	Stairs '88	Manitoba Ed '89
Herlan '88	Zinsser '88	Smith '88	Canada, Sec/State '87
Young,Ing '88	Fiordo '88	Handscombe '88	Alberta Native Affairs '85 , 3
Jules '88	Simon Frsr U'85	Landon '88	Alberta Ed '84
Demmert '87	Developing '86	Telidetzki '88	Alberta Ed'85 , 2
Mock '84	Harvey, Cap '87, 3 abstracts	MacKenzie, Beaupre, '86	Alberta Municpl Affairs '84
Elofson, Elofson'88	Pard, et al '86	Mazurek '88	Alberta Ombudsman '84
Miller '87	Quilty, et al '86	Paulet '87	Lee '83
Griffiths '87	Blankenship '86	Lang, Scarfe '86	Ingram, McIntosh '83, 2
Friesen '87	Four Worlds '84, 3 abstracts	Friesen '86	Alberta Tourism '83
Ames '86	Four Worlds ,9	Smith, Pace '87	I.D Systems'82,3
Warnica '86	Kipohtakaw '84	Knight et al '86	Decore et al '82,2
Kirkness '86	Klesner '82	Archibald '86	Norton '81
Wall, '85	Manitoba Ed '84	Marsh '84	Ross '81
Woloshyn, Sloan, '84	Courtel, Amyot '85	Toohey, Hanson '85	Alberta Native Affairs '86 ,2
Cobarrubias, '83	Fabris et al '84	Hurlburt '84	
Wells, '85	Power '83 , 2	Martyn '84	
Edmonds, '84	British Cl. Ed '83	Sturgess '84	
Tanquay, '84	Fraser '83, 2	Castleden etal'83	
Murray '85	NWT Ed '81 , 2	Ont Indian Ed'81	
Bezeau, '84		Carney '82	
Raudsepp, '84		Moore-Eyman'81	
More, '84		Read '83	
Rothe, '83		McKenzie '89	
Blanchard '83		Lidster '78	
Kienetz '86			

Table 2 (b): Categories and Author(s) of Abstracts in Each Category

Native Lang	Bibs/Directories	Classrm+culture	Evaluation
McEachern, Moeller ‘89	Benally et al ‘90	Kawagley ‘90	Riffel, Sealey ‘87
Ahenakew ‘88	Annis ‘86	Stairs ‘91	Sealey et al ‘87
Lickers ‘88	Manitoba Ed ‘88	Leavitt ‘91	Owston ‘86
McEachern ‘88	Alaska Ed ‘87	Snively ‘91	Gardner ‘86
Goniwiecha, Hales ‘88	Green, Sawyer ‘83	Elofson, Elofson ‘88	Hebert ‘86
Burnaby ‘82 (2)	Alberta Ed ‘87	Oakes ‘88	Sealey, Riffel ‘86
Stairs ‘87	Klein ‘86	C Yukon Ind ‘86	Riffel,Sealey ‘85
Battiste ‘84	Price ‘86	Williamson ‘87	Sealey, Riffel ‘85
Crago, Annahatak ‘85	Ramratten, Kach ‘85	Leary, Stiegelbauer ‘85	Hamilton, Owston ‘83
Ahenakew ‘85	Loeb, Comp ‘85	Marcuzzi ‘86	Sealey, Riffel ‘84
Robinson ‘85	Four Worlds ‘84	Fiordo ‘85	Riffel, Sealey ‘84
Burnaby ‘84 (2)	Native Peopl ‘86	Mayfield ‘85	Este ‘84
Douard ‘82	More ‘83 and ‘81	Fiordo ‘84	Wilcox ‘84
Howard ‘83	Tonn ‘81	Chan ‘84	Hebert ‘84
Fagan, Currie ‘83	Barnett, Dyer ‘83	Laveault ‘82	Four Worlds
Burnaby et al ‘80	Patterson ‘87	Steele ‘89	
	Ullom ‘69		
	Dyer, ‘86		

Table 2(c): Categories and Author(s) of Abstracts in Each Category

History	Special Educ	LclControl/Schs	Governance
Jacobson ‘88	Scaldwell ‘89	Green ‘90	Cozetto ‘90
Schilz ‘88	Duquette ‘88	Walton ‘89	McKenzie ‘89
Adams ‘88 . Chalmers, ‘85	Phillips, Cranwell ‘88	Isherwood et al ‘86	Cloutier ‘88
Brown ‘83	Common, Fr, ‘88	Kirkness ‘85	Vecsey ‘87
Hamilton ‘85,‘86	Shulz, Bravi ‘86	Cummins ‘85	Ward ‘86
Dickason ‘82	Mulchahy etal‘84	Pauls ‘84	La Rocque ‘78
Jaenan ‘83,84	Laveault et al ‘83	Murphy ‘84	Yuzdepski ‘83
Bennett, Jaenan ‘86	Myles,Ratzlaff ‘88	Hurlburt et al‘83, 2	Charles ‘81
Ray ‘82	Scaldwell ‘85	Owston ‘83	Charles ‘82
Judd ‘82	Melberg ‘86		
Peterson ‘82	Blank, Parker ‘86		

Table 2(d): Categories and Author(s) of Abstracts in Each Category

Literature	Community/Dev	Counselling	Univ Students
Grant '88	Ryan '88	Roberts et al '89	Hurlburt et al '90
Ballard '88	Hull '90	Hanley '88	Brose '88
Gardner '88	Guillory et al '88	Dawson '88	Whittaker '86
Grant '86	Rossel '88	Gade '88	Degen '85
Grant '87	Bartels '85	Hurlburt '85	McEachern '84
McGrath '88	Four Worlds '84	Darou '87	Blue, Blue '83
DeFaveri '84	Wonders '84	Gade et al '84	Webster, Garrod '90
Thompson '84	Price '83	Ludwig '83	
Wason-Ellam '88			

Table 2(e): Categories and Author(s) of Abstracts in Each Category

Achievement	Journals, Lit Sel	LearningStyles	Technology
Cameron '90	Brady '89	Foreman '91	Stiles '84
Clifton, Roberts '88	Churchill '89	Mariash '83	Faith, Sturrock '90
Schmidt et al '87	Jabbour '88	Tamaoka '86	Coldevin, Wilson '85
Persi, Brunatti '87	Norman '83	Leith, Sientz '84	Granzberg' 85
Rampaul et al '84 (2)	Ellis '84	More '84	Heffron '84
	Gilliland '76		

Table 2(f): Categories and Author(s) of Abstracts in Each Category

Alternate Prgms	Music/Musiclgy	Health	ESL
Regnier '87	Ridington '88	Clarke '89	Lightbrown '88
Scott-Brown '87	Lederman '88	Shawana, Taylor '88	Burnaby '88
Hall '86	Gray '88	Caverson, et al '87	Toohey, Allen '85
Lee, '86	Fisher '88	Peters '87	
Campbell '83	Lee '84		

Table 2(g): Categories and Author(s) of Abstracts in Each Category

Miscellaneous (General)	**Miscellaneous cont'd**
Bogle '83	Davis '86
Friedman, Friedman '81	Barnhardt et al '82
Millar, Roberts '81	Pomedli '87
Allison '83	Anderson '90
Parsons et al '83	Waldrum '90
	Jospehson '87